





*Cobbs of Kent.*

**Frederick W. Cobb**










Dr. W. Cobb  
from F. D. C.

*Thirty Tales*  
& *Sketches*



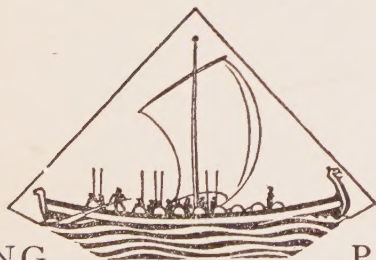
Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2022 with funding from  
Kahle/Austin Foundation

*Thirty*  
*Tales & Sketches*

*by*

R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM

*Selected by Edward Garnett*



*The* VIKING

NEW YORK

PRESS • 1929



PRINTED IN U. S. A.  
COPYRIGHT, 1929, THE VIKING PRESS, INC.

## Introduction

"Why did I not hear of *Thirteen Stories* before? Cunninghame Graham's sketches are unknown in America. All the world should hear of them." So wrote to me lately a fine judge of literature. This message roused me to carry out an old plan and make a selection of Cunninghame Graham's Sketches and Tales in a volume which I hope will be followed by a second. My correspondent's admiration for "The Goldfish," "A Hegira," "In a German Tramp," does not exceed my own. I recall how enthusiastic I was, thirty years back, over Cunninghame Graham's contributions to *The Saturday Review* and I wrote then and suggested that he should collect and publish them under the title of *The Ipané*, as Volume One of The Overseas Library. The immortal "Niggers" appeared in that little volume, and "Niggers" gives the keynote to its author's genius, outlook and attitude to his fellows. That and its fellow sketch "Success" stamp him, in W. H. Hudson's words, as "Singulárisimo Escritor Inglés," the most singular of English writers, and they would confer immortality on him if he had written nothing more. The reception of *The Ipané* (1899), of *Thirteen Stories* (1901) and of *Success* (1903) showed where he stood in relation to his countrymen. The inner ring of

## Introduction

readers, those few hundreds who delight in the quality of a strange, unique personality, became his ardent admirers, but on the great British public at large, feeding on every variety of popular literature, from Crockett to Marie Corelli, from Stanley Weyman to Hall Caine, from Conan Doyle to Henry Seton Merriman, from Anthony Hope to Lucas Malet, on this huge public Cunninghame Graham made no impression for many years. How should he? Many had heard of him and of the Trafalgar Square Riots, years before, but, feeding gregariously, the British public long eyed his sketches much as a rhinoceros might eye a stag, and passed them by to browse on *The Wages of Sin* and *Ships That Pass in the Night*. But *The Ipané* and *Success* left the British reviewers uncomfortably irritated. Cunninghame Graham as a writer stood in a minority of one, even as, when as a Labour M. P. he spoke in the House of Commons, Conservatives and Liberals alike would stare at him in vacant amazement, wondering what the devil he was talking about. We have moved on a bit since those happy days of the sweating system, of the Jubilee and of the Transvaal War, and as though to mark our progress in wisdom and understanding, we have had the Great War and the British Amritsar Massacre since. But the point I wish to make is that Cunninghame Graham's attitude from the nineties onward was both that of a man more than fifty years ahead of his time and that of a *grand seigneur*, as Conrad always insisted, born out of his period. It is perhaps still a little early



## Introduction

to see his figure and his work in true perspective, but to both the Anglo-Saxon and the Latin worlds he must always remain "a most singular writer," because he combines in himself those racial elements of North and South that ordinarily have little to say to one another. Both his perfervid Scotch blood and his Latin-Spanish strain are alien from "the bold, beef-eating, generous, narrow-minded" English race, which he defines so happily in "Niggers." Cunninghame Graham's cosmopolitanism was ordained when in youth he earned his living on cattle ranches in Texas and in South America, where he lived among the gauchos in Uruguay and was familiar with many States and all sorts and conditions of men. Later his life as a Scotch landowner was diversified by his visits to Morocco and his close acquaintance with Arab ways of life, which latter he has set down in that little-known classic of travel, *Mogreb-el-Akhsa* (1898). His intimate familiarity with the old Spanish life and the Spanish conquistadores is attested by nine volumes of historical and biographical studies.\*

To return to the Stories, Cunninghame Graham never developed further the simple but effective technique of his sketches, from which I have selected thirty examples. He paints men and their manners and environment to the life, and he has a special sense for landscape; but he does not

\*I. The Conquest of the River Plate II. A Vanished Arcadia III. The Conquest of New Granada IV. Hernando de Soto V. Cartagena and the Banks of the Sinú VI. A Brazilian Mystic VII. Pedro de Valdivia VIII. Bernal Díaz del Castillo IX. José Antonio Páez.

## Introduction

individualize his types and we see them rather through his own eyes than through their fellows'. He is in fact less of a story-teller than a critical observer and commentator. One must take an author as one finds him and both in his personal narratives as in "Cruz Alta" (too long to include in this volume) and in his more objective sketches he reaches the mark he aims at. He has spontaneity, breadth of vision and passionate fire, under the ice of his disdain. His extraordinarily keen eye for detail makes his pictures accurate to a fault, for he is prone to crowd his canvas with too literal a record of things seen. But his spontaneity, ease and directness mark a style of high individuality. One may sometimes indeed complain that his style is a little too natural, but his style admirably mirrors his thought and feeling. Having the Latin clarity of vision and seeing humanity without idealizing veils, and setting down what he sees boldly, without compromise, Cunninghame Graham would be almost outside our limited Anglo-Saxon pale were it not for his wit and humour and for our sympathy with his love of unpopular causes and with his peculiar tenderness for the weak and oppressed. His wit is very fine and flickers round his subject, as in "Niggers," illumining it with lightning; his humour, now all pervasive, bathing his characters as in "Aunt Eleanor" in a delicious light, can be grim as in "Beattock for Moffat" where Jock and Jean talk to the dying man. He has the *sæva indignatio* but no sentimentality. His detestation of society's collective hypocrisy, whether of priv-

### *Introduction*

ileged classes or of masses of men, and of the cant of "civilization," brought him to shiver many a lance against the triple brass of British industrialism, commercialism and Imperialism. But I have said enough. A more gallant spirit, one of higher courage than Cunninghame Graham, has not fought in the public arena in my day. It is with abiding admiration that we salute the figure of the author of "Niggers," this "most singular writer."

EDWARD GARNETT



## *Note*

The editor and the publishers desire to acknowledge with thanks Messrs. W. Heinemann's permission to reprint the four sketches from *Redeemed*, and Messrs. Ernest Benn's permission to reprint the two sketches from *The Ipané*.

## Contents

### *From* THE IPANÉ, 1899

<i>Niggers</i>	3
<i>With the North-West Wind</i>	16

### *From* THIRTEEN STORIES, 1900

<i>In a German Tramp</i>	27
<i>The Gold Fish</i>	41
<i>A Hegira</i>	54
<i>La Pulpería</i>	75
<i>Higginson's Dream</i>	85

### *From* SUCCESS, 1902

<i>Success</i>	97
<i>Might, Majesty, and Dominion</i>	104
<i>Sursum Corda</i>	108
<i>Beattock for Moffat</i>	119
<i>The Impenitent Thief</i>	132

## *Contents*

### *From PROGRESS, 1905*

<i>San José</i>	141
<i>Faith</i>	160

### *From HIS PEOPLE, 1906*

<i>Signalled</i>	177
<i>A Memory of Parnell</i>	186

### *From FAITH, 1909*

<i>Sor Candida and the Bird</i>	199
<i>An Idealist</i>	217
<i>In Christmas Week</i>	225

### *From HOPE, 1910*

<i>Un Monsieur</i>	235
--------------------	-----

### *From CHARITY, 1912*

<i>Aunt Eleanor</i>	247
<i>Aurora La Cujíñi</i>	257
<i>A Princess</i>	271



## *Contents*

### *From A HATCHMENT, 1913*

*Anastasia Lucena* 283

### *From BROUGHT FORWARD, 1916*

*With the North-East Wind* 295

*El Tango Argentino* 302

### *From REDEEMED, 1927*

*Wilfrid Scawen Blunt* 317

*Long Wolf* 327

*El Alcade De Móstoles* 337

*Inveni Portum* 346



*From*  
THE IPANÉ  
1899



## *Niggers*

**J**AHVE created all things, especially the world in which we live, and which is really the centre of the universe, in the same way as England is the centre of the planet, and as the Stock Exchange is the real centre of all England, despite the dreams of the astronomers and the economists. He set the heavens in their place, bridled the sea, disposed the tides, the phases of the moon, made summer, winter, and the seasons in their due rotation, showed us the constant resurrection of the day after the death of night, sent showers, hail, frost, snow, thunder and lightning, and the other outward manifestations of his power to serve, to scourge, or to affright us, according to his will.

Under the surface of our world he set the minerals, metals, the coal, and quicksilver, with platinum, gold, and copper, and let his diamonds and rubies, with sapphires, emeralds, and the rest, as topazes, jacinths, peridots, sardonyx, tourmalines, or chrysoberyls, take shape and colour, and slowly carbonize during the ages.

Upon the upper crust of the great planet he caused the plants to grow, the trees, bushes of every kind, from the hard, cruciform-leaved carmamoel, to the pink-flowering Siberian willow. Palm trees and oaks, ash, plane, and syc-

## *Niggers*

more, with churchyard yew, and rowan, holly, jacaranda, greenheart and pines, larch, willow, and all kinds of trees that flourish, rot, and die unknown in tropic forests, un-plagued by botanists, with their pestilent *Pinus Smithii* or *Cupressus Higginbottomiana*, rustled their leaves, swayed up and down their branches, and were content, fearing no axe. Canebrakes and mangrove swamps; the immeasurable extension of the Steppes, Pampas, and Prairies, and the frozen Tundras of the north; stretches of ling and heather, with bees buzzing from flower to flower, larks soaring into heaven above them; acres of red verbena in the Pampa; lilies and irises in Africa, and the green-bluish sage brush desert of the middle prairies of America; cactus and tacuarás, with istle and maguey, flax, hemp, esparto, and the infinite variety of the compositae, all praised his name.

Again, in the Sahara, in the Kalahari desert, in the Libyan sands, and Iceland, he denied almost all vegetation, and yet his work seemed good to those his creatures—Arabs, Bosjesmans, reindeer, and Arctic foxes, with camels, ostriches, and eider ducks, who peopled his waste spaces. He breathed his breath into the nostrils of the animals, giving them understanding, feeling, power of love and hatred, speech after their fashion, love of offspring (if logic and anatomy hold good), souls and intelligence, whether he made their bodies biped or quadruped, after his phantasy. Giraffes and tigers, with jerboas, grey soft chinchillas, elephants, armadillos and sloths, ant-eaters, marmots, antelopes, and the fast-



## *Niggers*

disappearing bison of America, gnus, springboks and hartbeest, ocelot and kangaroo, bears (grizzly and cinnamon), tapirs and wapiti, he made for man to shoot, to torture, to abuse, to profit by, and to demonstrate by his conduct how inferior in his conception of how to use his life he is to them.

All this he did and rested, being glad that he had done so much, and called a world into existence that seemed likely to be good. But even he, having begun to work, was seized with a sort of "*cacoethes operandi*," and casting about to make more perfect what, in fact, needed no finishing touch, he took his dust and, breathing on it, called up man. This done he needed rest again, and having set the sun and moon just in the right position to give light by day and night to England, he recollected that a week had passed. That is to say, he thought of time, and thinking, made and measured it, not knowing, or perhaps not caring, that it was greater than himself; for, had he chanced to think about the matter, perchance, he had never chosen to create it, and then our lives had been immeasurable, and our capacity for suffering even more infinite than at present, that is, if "infinite" admits comparison. However, time being once created and man imagined (but not yet perfected), and, therefore, life the heavy burden being imposed on him, the Lord, out of His great compassion, gave us death, the compensating boon which makes life tolerable.

But to return to man. How, when, why, wherefore, whether in derision of himself, through misconception, in-

## *Niggers*

advertence, or sheer malignity, he created man, is still unknown. With the true instinct of a tyrant (or creator, for both are one), he gave us reason to a certain power, disclosed his acts up to a certain point, but left the motives wrapped in mystery. Philosophers and theologians, theosophists, positivists, clairvoyants, necromancers, cabalists, with Rosicrucians and alchemists, and all the rabble rout of wise and reverend reasoners from Thales of Miletus down to Nietzsche, have reasoned, raved, equivocated, and contradicted one another, framed their cosmogonies, arcana, written their gospels and Korans, printed their Tarot packs, been martyred, martyred others (fire the greatest syllogist on earth), and we no wiser.

Still man exists, black, white, red, yellow, and the Pintos of the State of Vera Cruz. A rare invention, wise conception, and the quintessence of creative power rendered complete by practice, for we must see that even an all-wise, all-powerful God (like ours) matures as time goes on.

An animal erect upon its feet, its eyes well placed, its teeth constructed to masticate all kinds of food, its brain seemingly capable of some development, its hearing quick, endowed with soul, and with its gastric juices so contained as to digest fish, flesh, grain, fruit, and stand the inroads of all schools of cookery, was a creative masterpiece. So all was ready and the playground delivered over beautiful to man, for men to make it hideous and miserable.

Alps, Himalayas, Andes, La Plata, and Vistula, Amazon,

## *Niggers*

with Mississippi, Yangtsekiang and Ganges, Volga, Rhine, Elbe and Don; Hecla and Stromboli, Pichincha, and Coto-paxi, with the Istacihuatl and Lantern of Maracaibo; seas, White and Yellow, with oceans, Pacific and Atlantic; great inland lakes as Titicaca, Ladoga, all the creeks, inlets, gulfs and bays, the plains, the deserts, geysers, hot springs on the Yellowstone, Pitch Lake of Trinidad, and, to be brief, the myriad wonders of the world, were all awaiting newly created man, waiting his coming forth from out the bridal chamber between the Tigris and Euphrates, like a mad bridegroom to run his frenzied course. Then came the (apparent) lapsus in the Creator's scheme. That the first man in the fair garden by the Euphrates was white, I think, we take for granted. True that we have no information on the subject, but in this matter of creation we have entered, so to speak, into a tacit compact with the creator and it behoves us to concur with him and help him when a difficulty looms.

Briefly I leave the time when man contended with the mastodon, hunted the mammoth, or was hunted in his turn by plesiosaurus or by pterodactyl. Scanty indeed are the records which survive of the Stone Age, the Bronze, or of the dwellers in the wattled wigwams on the lakes. Suffice it that the strong preyed on the weak, as they still do today in happy England, and that early dwellers upon earth seem to have thought as much as we do how to invent appliances with which to kill their foes.

The Hebrew Scriptures, and the record of crimes of vio-

## *Niggers*

lence and bad faith committed by the Jews on other races need not detain us, as they resemble so entirely our own exploits amongst the "niggers" of today. I take it that Jahve was little taken up with any of his creatures, except the people who inhabited the countries from which the Aryans came. Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Persians, and the rest were no doubt useful and built pyramids, invented hanging gardens, erected towers, observed the stars, spoke the truth (if their historians lie not), drew a good bow, and rode like centaurs or like Gauchos. What did it matter when all is said and done? They were all "niggers," and whilst they fought and conquered, or were conquered, bit by bit the race which God had thought of from the first, slowly took shape.

A doubt creeps in. Was the creator omniscient in this case, or did our race compel him, force his hand, containing in itself those elements of empire which he may have overlooked? 'Twere hard to say, but sometimes philosophers have whispered that the Great Power, working, as he did, without the healthy stimulus of competition, was careless. I leave this speculation as more fit for thimblerriggers, for casuists, for statisticians, metaphysicians, or the idealistic merchant, than for serious men.

Somehow or other the Aryans spread through Europe, multiplied, prospered, and possessed the land. Europe was theirs, for Finns and Basques are not worth counting, being, as it were, a sort of European "niggers," destined to disap-

## *Niggers*

pear. Little by little out of the mist of barbarism Greece emerged. Homer and Socrates, with Xenophon, Euripides, Pindar and Heraclitus, Bion, Anaximander, Praxiteles, with Plato, Pericles, and all the rest of the poets and thinkers, statesmen and philosophers, who in that little state carried the triumphs of the human intellect, at least as far as any who came after them, flourished, and died. Material and bourgeois Rome, wolf-suckled on its seven hills, waxed and became the greatest power, conquering the world by phrases as its paltry "Civis Romanus," and by its "Pax Romana," and with the spade, and by the sheer dead weight of commonplace, filling the office in the old world that now is occupied so worthily by God's own Englishmen. Then came the waning of the Imperial City, its decay illumined but by the genius of Apuleius and Petronius Arbiter. Whether the new religion which the pipe-clayed soldier Constantine adopted out of policy, first gave the blow, or whether, as said Pliny, that the Latifundia were the ruin of all Italy, or if the effeminacy which luxury brings with it made the Roman youths resemble the undersized, hermaphroditic beings who swarm in Paris and in London, no one knows.

Popes and Republics, Lombards, Franks and Burgundians, with Visigoths and Huns, and the phantasmagoria of hardly-to-be-comprehended beings who struggled in the darker ages like microbes in a piece of flesh, or like the Christian paupers in an English manufacturing town, all paved the way for the development of the race, perhaps, in-

## *Niggers*

tended, from the beginning, to rule mankind. From when King Alfred toasted his cakes and made his candles marked in rings \* (like those weird bottles full of sand from Alum Bay) to measure time, down to the period when our present Sovereign wrote her "Diary in the Highlands," is but a moment in the history of mankind. Still, in the interval, our race has had full leisure to mature. Saxon stolidity and Celtic guile, Teutonic dulness, Norman pride, all tempered with east wind, baptized with mist, narrowed by insularity, swollen with good fortune, and rendered overbearing with much wealth, have worked together to produce the type. A bold, beef-eating, generous, narrow-minded type, kindly but arrogant; the men fine specimens of well-fed animals, red in the blood and face; the women cleanly, "upstanding" creatures, most divinely tall; both sexes slow of comprehension, but yet not wanting sense; great feeders, lovers of strong drinks, and given to brutal sports, as were their prototypes, the men of ancient Rome; dogged as bull-dogs, quick to compassion for the sufferers from the injustice of their neighbours; thinking that they themselves can do no wrong, athletic though luxurious; impatient of all hardships, yet enduring them when business shows a profit or when honour calls; moralists, if such exist, and still, like cats, not quite averse to fish when the turn serves; clear-headed in affairs, but idealists and, in the main, wrong-headed in their views of life; priding themselves most chiefly on their faults, and

\* Staple industry of the Isle of Wight.



## *Niggers*

resolute to carry all those virtues which they lack at home, to other lands.

Thus, through the mist of time, the Celto-Saxon race emerged from heathendom and woad, and, in the fulness of the Creator's pleasure, became the tweed-clad Englishman. Much of the earth was his, and in the skies he had his mansion ready, well aired, with every appliance known to modern sanitary science waiting for him, and a large Bible on the chest of drawers in every room. Australia, New Zealand, Canada, India, and countless islands, useful as coaling stations and depots where to stack his Bibles for diffusion amongst the heathen, all owned his sway. Races, as different from his own as is a rabbit from an elephant, were ruled by tweed-clad satraps expedited from the public schools, the universities, or were administered by the dried fruits culled from the Imperial Bar. But whilst God's favoured nation thus had run its course, the French, the Germans, Austrians, Spaniards, Dutch, Greeks, Italians, and all the futile remnant of mankind outside "our flag" had struggled to equal it. True that in most particulars they were inferior. Their beer was weak, their shoddy not so artfully diffused right through their cloth, their cottons less well "sized," the constitution of their realm less nebulous, or the Orders of their Churches better authenticated, than were our own. No individual of their various nationalities by a whole life of grace was ever half so moral as the worst of us is born.

## *Niggers*

And so I leave them weltering in their attempts to copy us, and turn to those of whom I had intended first to write, but whom the virtues, power, might, and dominion of our race have caused me to forget.

I wished to show how Jahve Sabaoth made the earth, planted his men, his beasts, his trees upon it, and then as if half doubtful of himself left it to simmer slowly till his Englishmen stood forth. I felt he was our God, jealous and blood-thirsty, as in his writings he has let us see; our God, and we His people, faithful to bloodshed, not that we liked it, but because we knew we did His will. We are His people and it was natural that He should give mankind into our hand. But yet it seemed that we had grown so godlike in ourselves that perhaps Jahve was waiting for us to indicate the way. He made the world and stocked it, planting apparently without design the basest peoples in the most favoured lands; then we stood forth to help him, and by degrees carried out all He thought of from the first.

In Africa, Australia, and in America, in all the myriad islands of the southern seas inferior races dwell. They have their names, their paltry racial differences, some are jet-black, some copper-coloured, flat-nosed, high-featured, tall, short, hideous or handsome—what is that to us? We lump them all as niggers, being convinced that their chief quality is their difference from ourselves.

Hindus, as Brahmins, Bengalis, and the dwellers in Bombay; the Cingalese, Sikhs and Pathans, Rajpoote, Parsis,

## *Niggers*

Afghans, Kashmiris, Beluchis, Burmese, with all the peoples from the Caspian Sea to Timur Laut, are thus described. Arabs are "niggers."

So are Malays, the Malagasy, Japanese, Chinese, Red Indians, as Sioux, Comanches, Navajos, Apaches with Zapotecas, the Esquimaux, and in the south Ranqueles, Lenguas, Pampas, Pehuelches, Tobas, and Araucanos, all these are "niggers" though their hair is straight. Turks, Persians, Levantines, Egyptians, Moors, and generally all those of almost any race whose skins are darker than our own, and whose ideas of faith, of matrimony, banking, and therapeutics differ from those held by the dwellers of the meridian of Primrose Hill, cannot escape. Men of the Latin races, though not born free, can purchase freedom with a price, that is, if they conform to our ideas, are rich and wash, ride bicycles, and gamble on the Stock Exchange. If they are poor, then woe betide them, let them paint their faces white with all the ceruse which ever Venice furnished, to the black favour shall they come. A plague on pigments, blackness is in the heart, not in the face, and poverty, no matter how it washes, still is black.

Niggers are niggers, whether black or white, but the archetype is found in Africa.

O Africa, land created out of sheer spleen, as if to show that even Jahve himself suffered at times from long continued work; in spleen, or else contrived out of his bounty to encourage us and serve as sweetener to his most favoured

## *Niggers*

nation in its self-appointed task! A country rich in itself, in animals, in vegetation, and in those minerals in which we chiefly see the evidence of the Creator's power. Rich, and yet given up to such a kind of men that they are hardly to be held as men at all. Scripture itself has asked half doubtingly if they can change their skins, but we who know the Scriptures as we know Bradshaw, making them books of reference in which to search for precepts to support our acts, are ready to reply.

The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, and therefore we are ready to possess his land and to uproot him for the general welfare of mankind, smiting him hip and thigh, as the Jews did the Canaanites when first they opened up the promised land. Niggers who have no cannons have no rights. Their land is ours, their cattle and their fields, their houses ours; their arms, their poor utensils, and everything they have; their women, too, are ours to use as concubines, to beat, exchange, to barter off for gunpowder or gin, ours to infect with syphilis, leave with child, outrage, torment, and make, by contact with the vilest of our vile, more vile than beasts.

Yet take us kindly, and at once the tender nature of our hearts is manifest to all. Cretans, Armenians, Cubans, Macedonians, we commiserate, subscribe, and feel for; our feeling souls are wrung when Outlanders cannot get votes. Bishops and cardinals and statesmen, with philanthropists and pious ladies, all go wild about the Turks.

## *Niggers*

England's great heart is sound, it beats for all the sorrows of mankind; we must press on, we owe it to ourselves and to our God; ours to perform our duty, his to provide the field; the world is ours, let us press on to do our mutual will, and lose no time, in case inferior aping nations may forestall us, cut in between us and all those we burn to serve, and having done so, then shoot out their tongues and say: "These were but weaklings, and their God made in their image, merely an Anglo-Saxon and anthropomorphous fool."

## *With the North-West Wind*

**A**S we never associated William Morris with fine weather, taking him rather to be a pilot poet lent by the Vikings to steer us from the Doldrums in which we now lie all becalmed in smoke to some Valhalla of his own creation beyond the world's end, it seemed appropriate that on his burial-day the rain descended and the wind blew half a gale from the north-west.

Amongst the many mysteries of enigmatic England few have more puzzled me than our attitude towards our rare great men. No one can say that in our streets they jostle other passengers, pushing the average man into the gutter, which is his own estate. Neither in Church nor State, nor in religion, the Press, the army, amongst the licensed victuallers, nor at the Bar, do they abound so much as to take the profits of the various jobs I have referred to, from their weaker foes. It may be that we think them "blacklegs," working, so to speak, for too long hours at too high pressure; it may be that the Democratic sentiment, of which we hear so much and see so little, thinks them, as Gracchus Babeuf did, nothing but "aristos" sent by an unjust God (himself a *ci-devant*) to trample on us.

Genius in England is a thing accursed, and that it is un-



## *With the North-West Wind*

pleasing even to the creator of all Englishmen is manifest by the marked disapproval shown to it by the majority of the created. Therefore, I take it in the future, as the vote has, so to speak, been taken by the show of sneers, that we shall not be called upon to stand much more of it.

So the rain descended, and the north-west wind battled and strove amongst the trees and chimney-tops, swirling the leaves and hats into the mud, making one think upon the fisherfolk, the men aboard the ocean tramps, the shepherds in the glens of Inverness-shire, upon the ranch-men out on the open prairie riding round the cattle, and on the outcasts of the El Dorado, crouching the livelong night under some Christian bridge or philanthropic railway arches.

I have a standing quarrel with "le grand capricieux" called Providence, but at a funeral it generally appears he does his best so to dispose the weather that the principal shall not regret the climate he has left. Seen through the gloom at Paddington, within the station, moving about like fish in an aquarium, were gathered those few faithful ones whom England had sent forth to pay respect to the most striking figure of our times.

Artists and authors, archæologists, with men of letters, Academicians, the pulpit, stage, the Press, the statesmen, craftsmen, and artificers, whether of books, or of pictures, or ideas, all otherwise engaged.

Philanthropists agog about Armenia, Cuba, and Crete,

### *With the North-West Wind*

spouting of Turks and infidels and foreign cruelties, whilst he who strove for years for Englishmen lay in a railway van.

The guilds were absent, with the Trades Unions and the craftsmen, the hammermen, the weavers, matchmakers, and those for whom he wrought.

Not that he was forgotten of those with whom he lived; for in a little group, forlorn, dishevelled, and their eyes grown dim with striving for the coming of the change, stood his own faithful house carles from Hammersmith, and they too followed their master to the end—standing upon the platform, as it were, on the brink of some new country over which they saw, but knew they could not reach.

When a great man dies in other countries all his last wishes are disregarded, even his family shrinks into a second rank, and he becomes the property of those who in his life flung mud at or neglected him. Outbursts of cant, oceans of snivel, are let loose upon his memory, so that it may be that in this instance our Saxon stodginess preserved us from some folly and bad taste. Yet I would have liked to see a crowd of people in the streets, at least a crowd of workmen, if but to mark the absence of the dead man's friends. Thus moralizing, the train slipped from the platform as a sledge slips through the snow, and in the carriage I found myself seated between some "revolutionaries."

Had they been cultured folk, it is ten to one the talk had run upon the colour of the dead man's shirt, his boots, his

## *With the North-West Wind*

squashy hat, and other things as worthy of remark.

Bourgeois et gens de peu, seated upon the hard, straight seats provided by the thoughtful company to mark the difference betwixt the passengers it lives off and those it cringes to, we moralized, each in our fashion, upon the man himself.

Kindly but choleric the verdict was; apt to break into fury, easily appeased, large-hearted, open-handed, and the "sort of bloke you always could depend on," so said the "comrades," and it seemed to me their verdict was the one I should have liked upon myself.

So we reached Oxford, and found upon the platform no representatives of that old Trades Union there to greet us, and no undergraduates to throng the station, silently standing to watch the poet's funeral. True it was Long Vacation; but had the body of some Buluwayo Burglar happened to pass, they all had been there. The ancient seat of pedantry, where they manufacture prigs as fast as butchers in Chicago "handle hogs," was all unmoved.

Sleeping the sleep of the self-satisfied were dons and masters and the crew of those who, if they chance once in a century to have a man of genius amongst them, are all ashamed of him.

Sleeping but stertorous, the city lay girt in its throng of jerry buildings, quite out of touch with all mankind, keeping its sympathy for piffing commentators on Menander; a bottler-up of learning for the rich with foolish regulations,

### *With the North-West Wind*

a Laodicea which men like Morris long ago cast from their mouths and mind.

So the storm went with us to Witney, which seems as little altered as when the saying was, "A badger and a Witney man you can tell them by their coat." Arrived at Lechlade, for the first time it appeared the ceremony was fitted for the man.

No red-faced men in shabby black to stagger with the coffin to the hearse, but in their place four countrymen in moleskin bore the body to an open haycart, all festooned with vines, with alder, and with bulrushes, and driven by a man who looked coeval with the Saxon Chronicle. And still the north-west wind bent trees and bushes, turned back the leaves of the bird maples upon their footstalks, making them look like poplars. The rain beat on the straggling briars, showering the leaves of guelder roses down like snow; the purple fruit of privet and ripe hips and haws hung on the bushes with the lurid look that berries only seem to have struggling through wreaths of bryony and traveller's joy and all the tangles of an unplashed hedge bordering a country lane in rural England. Along the road a line of slabs of stone extended, reminding one of Portugal; ragweed and loosestrife, with rank hemp agrimony, were standing dry and dead, like reeds beside a lake, and in the rain and wind the yokels stood at the cross-roads or at the openings of the bridle-paths. Somehow they seemed

### *With the North-West Wind*

to feel that one was gone who thought of them, and our driver said, "We've lost a dear good friend in Master Morris; I've driven him myself 'underds of miles." No funeral carriages, but country flys driven by red-faced men in mole-skins, carried the mourners, and in a pony cart a farmer, with a face as red as are the bottles in a chemist's window, brought up the rear, driving his shaggy pony with the air of one who drives a hearse.

Through Lechlade, with its Tudor church, its gabled houses roofed with Winsford slates all overgrown with houseleek and with lichens, and with the stalks of wallflower and valerian projecting from the chinks, we took our way.

There, unlike Oxford, the whole town was out, and from the diamond-paned and bevelled windows gazed children in their print dresses and sunbonnets which Morris must have loved. Then Farmer Hobbs' van drew up before the little church which is now rendered famous by the description of the illustrious man who sleeps so close to it. The row of limes, flagged walks, the ample transept and square porch, the row of sun-dials down the wall, most with their gnomons lost, is known to all the world.

Time had dealt leniently with it, and the Puritans have stayed their fury at the little cross upon the tower.

Inside, the church was decorated for a harvest festival, the lamps all wreathed with ears of oats and barley, whilst round the font and in the porch lay pumpkins, carrots, and



### *With the North-West Wind*

sheaves of corn—a harvest festival such as Morris perhaps had planned, not thinking he himself would be the chiefest firstfruit.


Standing amongst the wet grass of the graves, artists and Socialists, with friends, relations, and the casual spectators, a group of yokels faced us, gaping at nothing, after the fashion of themselves and of their animals. And then I fancied for a moment that the strong oak coffin, with its wrought-iron handles and pall of Anatolian velvet, was opened, and I saw the waxen face and features of the dead man circled by his beard, and in his shroud, his hands upon his breast, looking like some old Viking in his sleep beside the body of his favourite horse, at the opening of some mound beside the sea in Scandinavia.

So dust to dust fell idly on my ears, and in its stead a vision of the England which he dreamed of filled my mind. The little church grew brighter, looking as it were filled with the spirit of a fuller faith embodied in an ampler ritual.

John Ball stood by the grave, with him a band of archers all in Lincoln green; birds twittered in the trees, and in the air the scent of apple-blossom and white hawthorn hung. All was much fairer than I had ever seen the country look, fair with a fairness that was never seen in England but by the poet, and yet a fairness with which he laboured to endue it. Once more the mist descended, and my sight grew dimmer; the England of the Fellowship was gone, John

*With the North-West Wind*

Ball had vanished, with him the archers, and in their place remained the knot of countrymen, plough-galled and bent with toil; the little church turned greyer, as if a reformation had passed over it. I looked again; the bluff, bold, kindly face had faded into the north-west wind.





*From*  
THIRTEEN STORIES  
*1900*



## *In a German Tramp*

THE tall, flaxen-haired stewardess Matilda had finished cutting Schwartzbrod and had gone to bed. The Danish boarhound slept heavily under the lee of the chicken-coops, the six or seven cats were upon the cabin sofa, and with the wind from the south-west, raising a terrific sea, and sending showers of spray flying over the tops of the black rocks which fringed the town, the S.S. *Oldenburg* got under way and staggered out into the gut.

The old white city girt on the seaward side by its break-water of tall black rocks, the houses dazzlingly white, the crenellated walls, the long stretch of sand, extending to the belt of grey-green scrub and backed in the distance by the sombre forest, lay in the moonlight as distinct and clear as it had been mid-day. Clearer perhaps, for the sun in a sandy landscape seems to blur the outlines which the moon reveals; so that throughout North Africa night is the time to see a town in all its beauty of effect. The wind, lifting the sand, drifted it whistling through the standing rigging of the tramp, coating the scarce dried paint, and making paint, rigging, and everything on board feel like a piece of shark-skin to the touch. The vessel groaned and laboured in the surface sea, and on the port quarter rose the rocks of the low



### *In a German Tramp*

island which forms the harbour, leaving an entrance of about half-a-mile between its shores and the rocks which guard the town.

West-south-west a little westerly, the wind ever increased; the sea lashed on the vessel's quarter, and in spite of the dense volumes of black smoke and showers of sparks flying out from the salt-coated smoke-stack, the tramp seemed to stand still. Upon the bridge the skipper screamed hoarsely in Platt-Deutsch down his connection-tube to the chief engineer; men came and went in dirty blue check cotton clothes and wooden shoes; occasionally a perspiring fireman poked his head above the hatch, and looking seaward for a moment, scooped off the sweat from his forefinger, muttered, "Gott freduma," and went below; even the Arab deck-hands, roused into activity, essayed to set a staysail, and the whole ship, shaken between the storm and the exertions of the crew, trembled and shivered in the yeasty sea. Nearer the rocks appeared, and the white town grew clearer, more intensely white, the sea frothed round the vessel, and the skipper, advancing to a missionary seated silently gazing across the water with a pallid sea-green face, slapped him upon the back, and with an oath said: "Mister, will you have one glass of beer?" The Levite in partibus, clad in his black alpaca Norfolk jacket, grey greasy flannel shirt and paper collar, with the whole man surmounted by the inevitable pith soup-tureen-shaped hat, the trade-mark of his confraternity, merely pressed both his hands harder upon

### *In a German Tramp*

his diaphragm and groaned. "One leetel glass beer, I have it from Olten, fifty dozen of it. Perhaps all to be wasted; have a glass beer, it will do your shtomag good." The persecuted United Presbyterian ambulant broke silence with one of those pious ejaculations which do duty (in the congregations) for an oath, and taking up his parable, fixing the pith tureen upon his head with due precaution, said: "Captain, ye see I am a total abstainer, joined in the Whifflet, and in addection I feel my stomach sort o' discomposed." And to him again, good Captain Rindelhaus rejoined: "Well, Mister Missionary, do you see dat rocks?" The Reverend Mr. McKerrochar, squinting to leeward with an agonizing stare, admitted that he did, but qualified by saying, "there was sic a halgh, he was na sure that they were rocks at all." "Not rocks! Kreuz-Sacrament, dose rocks you see are sharp as razors, and the back-wash off them give you no jance; I dell you, sheep's-head preacher, dat point de way like sign-board and not follow it oop himself, you better take glass beer in time, for if the schip not gather headway in about five minutes you perhaps not get another jance." After this dictum, he stood looking into the night, his glass gripped in his left hand, and in his right a half-smoked-out cigar, which he put to his mouth mechanically now and then, but drew no smoke from it. The missionary too looked at the rocks with increased interest, and the Arab pilot staggering up the ladder to the bridge stolidly pointed to the surf, and gave as his opinion, that "he, the

### *In a German Tramp*

captain and the faqui would soon be past the help of prayer," piously adding, "that it seemed Allah's will; although he thought the Kaffirs, sons of burnt Kaffirs, in the stoke-hole were not firing up."

With groans and heavings, with long shivers which came over her as the sea struck her on the beam, the vessel fought for her life, belching great clouds of smoke out into the clear night air. Captain and missionary, pilot and crew, stood gazing at the sea; the captain now and then yelling some unintelligible Platt-Deutsch order down the tube; the missionary fumbling with a Bible lettered "Polyglot," covered in black oil-cloth; and the pilot passing his beads between the fingers of his right hand, his eyes apparently not seeing anything; and it seemed as if another twenty minutes must have seen them all upon the rocks.

But Allah perhaps was on the watch; and the wind falling for an instant, or the burnt Kaffirs in the stoke-hole having struck a better vein of coal, the rusty iron sea-coffin slowly gathered headway, staggered as the engines driven to the highest pressure seemed to tear out her ribs, and forged ahead. Then lurching in the sea, the screw occasionally racing with a roar, and the black decks dripping and under water, the scuppers being choked with the filth of years, she sidled out to sea, and rose and fell in the long rollers outside the harbour, which came in from the west. Rindelhaus set her on her course, telling the Arab helmsman in the pigeon-English which served them as a means

### *In a German Tramp*

of interchanging their few ideas, "to keep her head north and by west a little northerly, and let him know when they were abreast of Jibel Hadid," adding a condemnation of the Arab race in general and the particular sailor, whom he characterized as a "tanned heaven dog, not worth his kraut." The sailor, dressed in loose Arab trousers and a blue jersey, the whole surmounted by a greasy fez, replied: "Yes, him know Jibel Hadid, captain, him keep her head north and by west all right," and probably also consigned the captain and the whole Germanic race to the hottest corner of Jehannum, and so both men were pleased. The boarhound gambolled on the deck, Matilda peeped up the companion, her dripping wooden shoes looking like waterlogged canoes, and the Scotch missionary began to walk about, holding his monstrous hat on with one hand and hugging the oilskin-covered "Polyglot" under his left arm. Crossing the skipper in his walk, in a more cheerful humour he ventured to remark: "Eh! captain, maybe I could mak' a shape at yon glass of beer the now." But things had changed, and Rindelshaus looked at him with the usual uncondescending bearing of the seaman to the mere passenger, and said: "Nein, you loose your obbordunity for dat glass beer, my friend, and now I have to navigate my ship."

The *Oldenburg* pursued the devious tenor of her way, touching at ports which all were either open roadsteads or had bars on which the surf boiled with a noise like thunder; receiving cargo in driblets, a sack or two of marjoram,

### *In a German Tramp*

a bale of goatskins or of hides, two or three bags of wool, and sometimes waiting for a day or two unable to communicate until the surf went down. The captain spent his time in harbour fishing uninterestedly, catching great bearded spiky-finned sea-monsters which he left to die upon the deck. Not that he was hard-hearted, but merely unimaginative, after the way of those who, loving sport for the pleasure it affords themselves, hotly deny that it is cruel, or that it can occasion inconvenience to any participator in a business which they themselves enjoy. So the poor innocent sea-monsters floundered in slimy agony upon the deck; the boarhound and the cats taking a share in martyring them, tearing and biting at them as they gasped their lives away; condemned to agony for some strange reason, or perhaps because, as every living thing is born to suffer, they were enduring but their fair proportion, as they happened to be fish. Pathetic but unwept, the tragedy of all the animals, and we but links in the same chain with them, look at it all as unconcerned as gods. But as the bearded spiky fish gasped on the deck the missionary tried to abridge their agony with a belaying-pin; covering himself with blood and slime, and setting up the back of Captain Rindelhaus, who vowed his deck should not be hammered "like a skidel alley, all for the sake of half-a-dozen fish, which would be dead in half-an-hour and eaten by the cats."

The marvels of our commerce, in the shape of Waterbury watches, scissors and looking-glasses, beads, Swiss clocks,

### *In a German Tramp*

and musical-boxes, all duly dumped, and the off-scouring of the trade left by the larger ships duly received on board, the *Oldenburg* stumbled out to sea if the wind was not too strong, and squirmed along the coast. Occasionally upon arrival at a port the sound of psalmody was heard, and a missionary boat put off to pass the time of God with their brother on the ship. Then came the greetings, as the whole party sat on the fiddlee gratings jammed up against the funnel; the latest news from the Cowcaddens and the gossip from along the coast was duly interchanged. Gaunt-featured girls, removed by physical conditions from all temptation, sat and talked with scraggy, freckled, and pith-hatted men. It was all conscience, and relatively tender heart, and as the moon lit up the dirty decks, they paraded up and down, happy once more to be secure even for a brief space from insult, and to feel themselves at home. Dressed in white blouses, innocent of stays, with skirts which no belt known to milliners could ever join to the body or the blouse; with smaller-sized pith hats, sand-shoes and spectacles; their hands in Berlin gloves, and freckles reaching far down upon their necks, they formed a crushing argument in their own persons against polygamy. Still, in the main, all kindly souls, and some with a twinkle in their white-eyelashed steel-grey eyes, as of a Congregationalist bull-terrier, which showed you that they would gladly suffer martyrdom without due cause, or push themselves into great danger, out of sheer ignorance and want of knowledge of



### *In a German Tramp*

mankind. Life's misfits, most of them; their hands early injured to typewriting machines, their souls, as they would say, "sair hodden doon in prayer"; carefully educated to be ashamed of any scrap of womanhood they might possess. Still they were sympathetic, for sympathy is near akin to tears, and looking at them one divined they must have shed tears plentifully, enough to wash away any small sins they had committed in their lives.

The men, sunburnt yet sallow, seemed nourished on tinned meats and mineral table-waters; their necks scraggy and red protruded from their collars like those of vultures; they carried umbrellas in their hands from early habit of a wet climate, and seemed as if they had been chosen after much cogitation by some unskilled commission, for their unfitness for their task.

They too, dogged and narrow-minded as they were, were yet pathetic, when one thought upon their lives. No hope of converts, or of advancement in the least degree, stuck down upon the coast, far off from Dorcas meetings, school-feasts, or anything which in more favoured countries whiles away the Scripture-reader's time; they hammered at their self-appointed business day by day and preached unceasingly, apparently indifferent to anything that passed, so that they got off their due quantity of words a day. In course of time, and after tea and bread-and-butter had been consumed, they got into their boat, struck up the tune of "Sidna Aissa Hobcum," and from the taffrail McKerrochar saw them de-

### *In a German Tramp*

part, joining in the chorus lustily and waving a dirty handkerchief until they faded out of sight. Mr. McKerrochar, one of those Scottish professional religionists, whom early training or their own "damnable iteration" has convinced of all the doctrine that they preach, formed a last relic of a disappearing type. The antiquated out-and-out doctrine of Hell-fire and of Paradise, the jealous Scottish God, and the Mosaic Dispensation which he accepted whole, tinged slightly with the current theology of Airdrie or Coatbridge, made him a formidable adversary to the trembling infidel, in religious strife. In person he was tall and loosely built, his trousers bagging at the knees as if a horse's hock had been inside the cloth. Wrong-headed as befits his calling, he yet saw clearly enough in business matters, and might have marked a flock of heathen sheep had he applied his business aptitude to his religious work, or on the other hand he might have made a fortune had he chanced to be a rogue. He led a joyless stirring life, striving towards ideals which have made the world a quagmire; yet worked towards them with that simple faith which makes a man ten thousand times more dangerous, in his muddle-headed course. Abstractions which he called duty, morality, and self-sacrifice, ruled all his life; forcing him ever onward to occupy himself with things which really he had no concern with; and making him neglect himself and the more human qualities of courtesy and love. And so he stood, waving his pocket handkerchief long after the strains of "Sidna Aissa Hobcum"

### *In a German Tramp*

had melted into the night air; his arms still waving as the sails of windmills move round once or twice, but haltingly, after the wind has dropped. Perhaps that class of man seldom or never chews the cud either of sweet or bitter recollection; and if, as in McKerrochar's case, he is deprived of whisky in which to drown his cares, the last impression gone, his mind hammers away, like the keys of a loose typewriter under a weary operator's hands, half aimlessly, till circumstances place new copy under its roller, and it starts off again to work.

He might have gone on waving right through the dog-watch had not the captain with a rough ejaculation stopped his arm. "Himmel, what for a semaphore, Herr missionary, is dat; and you gry too, when you look at dat going-way boat. . . . Well, have a glass of beer. I tell you it is not good to look at boats and gry for noddings, for men that have an ugly yellow beard like yours and mine."

"I was na greetin', captain," said the missionary, furtively wiping his face; "it was just ane of thae clinkers, I think thae ca' the things, has got into my eye."

"Glinkers, mein friend, do not get into people's eyes when der ship is anchored," Rindelhaus replied; "still I know as you feel, but not for missionary boats. You not know Oldenburg, eh? Pretta place; not far from Bremerhaven. Oldenburg is one of the prettaest places in the world. I live dere. Hour and half by drain, oot from de port. I just can see the vessels' masts and the funnel smoke as they pass oop and

### *In a German Tramp*

down the stream. I think I should not care too much to live where man can see no ships. Yes, yes, ah, here come Matilda mit de beer. Mein herz, you put him down here on dis bale of marjoram, and you goes off to bed. I speak here mit der Herr missionary, who gry for noddings when he look at missionary boat go off into de night.

“Ah, Oldenburg, ja, yes, I live there. Meine wife she live there, and meine littel Gretchen, she about den or twelve, I don’t remember which. Prosit, Herr missionary, you have no wife; no littel Gretchen, eh? So, so, dat is perhaps better for a missionary.”

The two sat looking at nothing, thinking in the painful ruminant way of semi-educated men, the captain’s burly North-German figure stretched on a cane deck-chair. About a captain’s age he was, that is, his beard had just begun to grizzle, and his nose was growing red, the bunions on his feet knotted his boots into protuberances, after the style of those who pass their lives about a deck. In height above six feet, broad-shouldered and red-faced, his voice of the kind with which a huntsman rates a dog, his clothes bought at a Bremerhaven slop-shop, his boots apparently made by a portmanteau-maker, and in his pocket was a huge silver keyless watch which he said was a “gronometer, and keep de Bremen time.” Instant in prayer and cursing; pious yet blasphemous; kindly but brutal in the Teutonic way; he kicked his crew about as they had all been dogs, and yet looked after the tall stewardess Matilda as she had been his

### *In a German Tramp*

child; guarding her virtue from the assaults of passengers, and, though alone with her in the small compass of a ship, respecting it himself.

After an interval he broke into his subject, just as a phonograph takes up its interrupted tale, as if against its will.

“So ja, yes, Oldenburg, pretta place; I not see it often though. In all eight years I never stay more to my house than from de morning Saturday to Monday noon, and dat after a four months’ trip.

“Meine wife, she getting littel sdout, and not mind much, for she is immer washing; washing de linen, de house, de steps; she wash de whole ship oop only I never let her come to see. The Gretchen she immer say: ‘Father, why you not stop to home?’ You got no littel Gretchen, eh? . . . Well, perhaps better so. Last Christmas I was at Oldenburg. Christmas eve I buy one tree, and then I remember I have to go to sea next morning about eleven o’clock. So I say noddings all the day, and about four o’clock the agent come and tell me that the company not wish me leave Oldenburg upon de Christmas day. Then I was so much glad I think I wait to eat meine Christmas dinner with meine wife, and talk with Gretchen in the evening while I smoke my pipe. The stove was burning, and the table stand ready mit sausage and mit bread and cheese, beer of course, and lax, dat lax they bring from Norway, and I think I have good time. Then I think on de company, what they say if I take favour

### *In a German Tramp*

from them and go not out to sea; they throw it in my teeth for ever, and tell me: 'Rindelhaus, you remember we was so good to you upon that Christmas day.' I tell the agent thank you, but say I go to sea. Meine wife she gry and I say noddings, noddings to Gretchen, and sit down to take my tea. Mórning, I tell my littel girl, then she gry bitterly and say: 'What for you go to sea?' I kiss meine wife and walk down to the quay; it just begin to snow; I curse the schelm sailors, de pilot come aboard, and we begin to warp into the stream. Just then I hear a running on the quay, like as a Friesland pony come clattering on the stones. I look up and see Gretchen mit her little wooden shoes. She run down to the ship, and say: 'Why you go sea, father, upon Christmas day?' and I not able to say noddings but just to wave my hand. We warp out into the stream, and she stand grying till she faded out of sight. Sometimes I feel a liddel sorry about dat Christmas day. . . . But have another glass beer, Herr missionary, it always do me good." Wiping the froth from his moustache with his rough hand he went below, leaving the missionary alone upon the deck.

The night descended, and the ship shrouded in mist grew ghostly and unnatural, whilst great drops of moisture hung on the backstays and the shrouds.

The Arab crew lay sleeping, huddled round the windlass, looking mere masses of white dirty rags; the seaman keeping the anchor-watch loomed like a giant, and from the shore occasionally the voices of the guards at the town



### *In a German Tramp*

prison came through the mist, making the boarhound turn in his sleep and growl. The missionary paced to and fro a little, settling his pith tureen-shaped hat upon his head, and fastening a woollen comforter about his neck.

Then going to the rail, he looked into the night where the boat bearing off his brethren had disappeared; his soul perhaps wandering towards some Limbo as he gazed, and his elastic-sided boots fast glued to the dirty decks by the half-dried-up blood of the discarded fish.

## *The Gold Fish*

OUTSIDE the little straw-thatched café in a small court-yard trellised with vines, before a miniature table painted in red and blue, and upon which stood a dome-shaped pewter teapot and a painted glass half filled with mint, sat Amarabat, resting and smoking hemp. He was of those whom Allah in his mercy (or because man in the Blad-Allah has made no railways) has ordained to run. Set upon the road, his shoes pulled up, his waistband tightened, in his hand a staff, a palm-leaf wallet at his back, and in it bread, some hemp, a match or two (known to him as *el spiritus*), and a letter to take anywhere, crossing the plains, fording the streams, struggling along the mountain-paths, sleeping but fitfully, a burning rope steeped in salt-petre fastened to his foot, he trotted day and night—untiring as a camel, faithful as a dog. In Rabat as he sat dozing, watching the greenish smoke curl upwards from his hemp pipe, word came to him from the Khalifa of the town. So Amarabat rose, paid for his tea with half a handful of defaced and greasy copper coins, and took his way towards the white palace with the crenellated walls, which on the cliff, hanging above the roaring tide-rip, just inside the bar of the great river, looks at Salee. Around the horseshoe arch-

## *The Gold Fish*

way of the gate stood soldiers, wild, fierce-eyed, armed to the teeth, descendants, most of them, of the famed warriors whom Sultan Muley Ismail (may God have pardoned him!) bred for his service, after the fashion of the Carlylean hero Frederic; and Amarabat walked through them, not aggressively, but with the staring eyes of a confirmed hemp-smoker, with the long stride of one who knows that he is born to run, and the assurance of a man who waits upon his lord. Some time he waited whilst the Khalifa dispensed what he thought justice, chaffered with Jewish pedlars for cheap European goods, gossiped with friends, looked at the antics of a dwarf, or priced a Georgian or Circassian girl brought with more care than glass by some rich merchant from the East. At last Amarabat stood in the presence, and the Khalifa, sitting upon a pile of cushions playing with a Waterbury watch, a pistol and a Koran by his side, addressed him thus:

“Amarabat, son of Bjorma, my purpose is to send thee to Tafilet, where our liege lord the Sultan lies with his camp. Look upon this glass bowl made by the Kaffir, but clear as is the crystal of the rock; see how the light falls on the water, and the shifting colours that it makes, as when the Bride of the Rain stands in the heavens, after a shower in spring. Inside are seven gold fish, each scale as bright as letters in an Indian book. The Christian from whom I bought them said originally they came from the Far East where the Djinn-descended Jawi live, the little yel-

### *The Gold Fish*

low people of the faith. That may be, but such as they are, they are a gift for kings. Therefore, take thou the bowl. Take it with care, and bear it as it were thy life. Stay not, but in an hour start from the town. Delay not on the road, be careful of the fish, change not their water at the muddy pool where tortoises bask in the sunshine, but at running brooks; talk not to friends, look not upon the face of woman by the way, although she were as a gazelle, or as the maiden who, when she walked through the fields, the sheep stopped feeding to admire. Stop not, but run through day and night, pass through the Atlas at the Glaui; beware of frost, cover the bowl with thine own haik; upon the other side shield me the bowl from the Saharan sun, and drink not of the water if thou pass a day athirst when toiling through the sand. Break not the bowl, and see the fish arrive in Tafilet, and then present them, with this letter, to our lord. Allah be with you, and his Prophet; go, and above all things see thou breakest not the bowl." And Amarabat, after the manner of his kind, taking the bowl of gold fish, placed one hand upon his heart and said: "Inshallah, it shall be as thou hast said. God gives the feet and lungs. He also gives the luck upon the road."

So he passed out under the horseshoe arch, holding the bowl almost at arm's length so as not to touch his legs, and with the palmetto string by which he carried it bound round with rags. The soldiers looked at him, but spoke not, and their eyes seemed to see far away, and to pass over

## *The Gold Fish*

all in the middle distance, though no doubt they marked the smallest detail of his gait and dress. He passed between the horses of the guard all standing nodding under the fierce sun, the reins tied to the cantles of their high red saddles, a boy in charge of every two or three: he passed beside the camels resting by the well, the donkeys standing dejected by the firewood they had brought: passed women, veiled white figures going to the baths; and passing underneath the lofty gateway of the town, exchanged a greeting with the half-mad, half-religious beggar just outside the walls, and then emerged upon the sandy road, between the aloe hedges, which skirts along the sea. So as he walked, little by little he fell into his stride; then got his second wind, and smoking now and then a pipe of hemp, began, as Arabs say, to eat the miles, his eyes fixed on the horizon, his stick stuck down between his shirt and back, the knob protruding over the left shoulder like the hilt of a two-handed sword. And still he held the precious bowl from Franquestan in which the golden fish swam to and fro, diving and circling in the sunlight, or flapped their tails to steady themselves as the water danced with the motion of his steps. Never before in his experience had he been charged with such a mission, never before been sent to stand before Allah's vicegerent upon earth. But still the strangeness of his business was what preoccupied him most. The fish like molten gold, the water to be changed only at running streams, the fish to be preserved from frost and sun; and then the

### *The Gold Fish*

bowl: had not the Khalifa said at the last: "Beware, break not the bowl"? So it appeared to him that most undoubtedly a charm was in the fish and in the bowl, for who sends common fish on such a journey through the land? Then he resolved at any hazard to bring them safe and keep the bowl intact, and trotting onward, smoked his hemp, and wondered why he of all men should have had the luck to bear the precious gift. He knew he kept his law, at least as far as a poor man can keep it, prayed when he thought of prayer, or was assailed by terror in the night alone upon the plains; fasted in Ramadan, although most of his life was one continual fast; drank of the shameful but seldom, and on the sly, so as to give offence to no believer, and seldom looked upon the face of the strange women, Daughters of the Illegitimate, whom Sidna Mohammed himself has said, avoid. But all these things he knew were done by many of the faithful, and so he did not set himself up as of exceeding virtue, but rather left the praise to God, who helped his slave with strength to keep his law. Then left off thinking, judging the matter was ordained, and trotted, trotted over the burning plains, the gold fish dancing in the water as the miles melted and passed away.

Duar and Kasbah, castles of the Caids, Arabs' black tents, suddra zaribas, camels grazing—antediluvian in appearance—on the little hills, the muddy streams edged all along the banks with oleanders, the solitary horsemen holding their long and brass-hooped guns like spears, the white-



## *The Gold Fish*

robed noiseless-footed travellers on the roads, the chattering storks upon the village mosques, the cow-birds sitting on the cattle in the fields—he saw, but marked not, as he trotted on. Day faded into night, no twilight intervening, and the stars shone out, Soheil and Rigel with Betelgeuse and Aldebaran, and the three bright lamps which the cursed Christians know as the Three Maries—called, he supposed, after the mother of their Prophet; and still he trotted on. Then by the side of a lone palm tree springing up from a cleft in a tall rock, an island on the plain, he stopped to pray; and sleeping, slept but fitfully, the strangeness of the business making him wonder; and he who cavils over matters in the night can never rest, for thus the jackal and the hyena pass their nights talking and reasoning about the thoughts which fill their minds when men lie with their faces covered in their haiks, and after prayer sleep. Rising after an hour or two and going to the nearest stream, he changed the water of his fish, leaving a little in the bottom of the bowl, and dipping with his brass drinking-cup into the stream for fear of accidents. He passed the Kasbah of el Daudi, passed the land of the Rahamna, accursed folk always in siba, saw the great snowy wall of Atlas rise, skirted Marakesh, the Kutubieh, rising first from the plain and sinking last from sight as he approached the mountains and left the great white city sleeping in the plain.

Little by little the country altered as he ran: cool streams for muddy rivers, groves of almond trees, ashes and elms,

## *The Gold Fish*

with grape-vines binding them together as the liana binds the canela and the urunday in the dark forests of Brazil and Paraguay. At mid-day, when the sun was at its height, when locusts, whirring through the air, sank in the dust as flying-fish sink in the waves, when palm trees seem to nod their heads, and lizards are abroad drinking the heat and basking in the rays, when the dry air shimmers, and sparks appear to dance before the traveller's eye, and a thin, reddish dust lies on the leaves, on clothes of men, and upon every hair of horses' coats, he reached a spring. A river springing from a rock, or issuing after running underground, had formed a little pond. Around the edge grew bulrushes, great catmace, water-soldiers, tall arums and metallic-looking sedge-grass, which gave an air as of an outpost of the tropics lost in the desert sand. Fish played beneath the rock where the stream issued, flitting to and fro, or hanging suspended for an instant in the clear stream, darted into the dark recesses of the sides; and in the middle of the pond enormous tortoises, horrid and antediluvian-looking, basked with their backs awash or raised their heads to snap at flies, and all about them hung a dark and fetid slime.

A troop of thin brown Arab girls filled their tall amphoræ whilst washing in the pond. Placing his bowl of fish upon a jutting rock, the messenger drew near. "Gazelles," he said, "will one of you give me fresh water for the Sultan's golden fish?" Laughing and giggling, the girls drew near, looked

at the bowl, had never seen such fish. "Allah is great; why do you not let them go in the pond and play a little with their brothers?" And Amarabat with a shiver answered: "Play, let them play! and if they come not back my life will answer for it." Fear fell upon the girls, and one advancing, holding the skirt of her long shift between her teeth to veil her face, poured water from her amphora upon the fish.

Then Amarabat, setting down his precious bowl, drew from his wallet a pomegranate and began to eat, and for a farthing buying a piece of bread from the women, was satisfied, and after smoking, slept, and dreamed he was approaching Tafilet; he saw the palm trees rising from the sand; the gardens; all the oasis stretching beyond his sight; at the edge the Sultan's camp, a town of canvas, with the horses, camels, and the mules picketed, all in rows, and in the midst of the great duar the Sultan's tent, like a great palace all of canvas, shining in the sun. All this he saw, and saw himself entering the camp, delivering up his fish, perhaps admitted to the sacred tent, or at least paid by a vizier, as one who has performed his duty well. The slow match blistering his foot, he woke to find himself alone, the "gazelles" departed, and the sun shining on the bowl, making the fish appear more magical, more wondrous, brighter, and more golden than before.

And so he took his way along the winding Atlas paths, and slept at Demnats, then, entering the mountains, met

## *The Gold Fish*

long trains of travellers going to the south. Passing through groves of chestnuts, walnut trees, and hedges thick with blackberries and traveller's joy, he climbed through vineyards rich with black Atlas grapes, and passed the flat mud-built Berber villages nestling against the rocks. Eagles flew by and moufflons gazed at him from the peaks, and from the thickets of lentiscus and dwarf arbutus wild boars appeared, grunted, and slowly walked across the path, and still he climbed, the icy wind from off the snow chilling him in his cotton shirt, for his warm Tadla haik was long ago wrapped round the bowl to shield the precious fish. Crossing the Wad Ghadat, the current to his chin, his bowl of fish held in one hand, he struggled on. The Berber tribesmen at Tetsula and Zarkten, hard-featured, shaved but for a chin-tuft, and robed in their achnifs with the curious eye woven in the skirt, saw he was a "rekass," or thought the fish not worth their notice, so gave him a free road. Night caught him at the stone-built, antediluvian-looking Kasbah of the Glaui, perched in the eye of the pass, with the small plain of Teluet two thousand feet below. Off the high snow-peaks came a whistling wind, water froze solid in all the pots and pans, earthenware jars and bottles throughout the castle, save in the bowl which Amarabat, shivering and miserable, wrapped in his haik and held close to the embers, hearing the muezzin at each call to prayers; praying himself to keep awake so that his fish might live. Dawn saw him on the trail, the bowl wrapped in a woollen rag, and the

## *The Gold Fish*

fish fed with bread-crumbs, but himself hungry and his head swimming with want of sleep, with smoking kief, and with the bitter wind which from El Tisi N'Glaui flagellates the road. Right through the valley of Teluet he still kept on, and day and night still trotting, trotting on, changing his bowl almost instinctively from hand to hand, a broad leaf floating on the top to keep the water still, he left Agurzga, with its twin castles, Ghresat and Dads, behind. Then rapidly descending, in a day reached an oasis between Todghra and Ferkla, and rested at a village for the night. Sheltered by palm trees and hedged round with cactuses and aloes, either to keep out thieves or as a symbol of the thorniness of life, the village lay, looking back on the white Atlas gaunt and mysterious, and on the other side towards the brown Sahara, land of the palm tree (Belad-el-Jerid), the refuge of the true Ishmaelite; for in the desert, learning, good faith, and hospitality can still be found—at least, so Arabs say.

Orange and azofaifa trees, with almonds, sweet limes and walnuts, stood up against the waning light, outlined in the clear atmosphere almost so sharply as to wound the eye. Around the well goats and sheep lay, whilst a girl led a camel round the Noria track; women sat here and there and gossiped, with their tall earthenware jars stuck by the point into the ground, and waited for their turn, just as they did in the old times, so far removed from us, but which in Arab life is but as yesterday, when Jacob cheated Esau, and

## *The Gold Fish*

the whole scheme of Arab life was photographed for us by the writers of the Pentateuch. In fact, the self-same scene which has been acted every evening for two thousand years throughout North Africa, since the adventurous ancestors of the tribesmen of today left Hadrumut or Yemen, and upon which Allah looks down approvingly, as recognizing that the traditions of his first recorded life have been well kept. Next day he trotted through the barren plain of Seddat, the Jibel Saghra making a black line on the horizon to the south. Here Berber tribes sweep in their razzias like hawks; but who would plunder a rekass carrying a bowl of fish? Crossing the dreary plain and dreaming of his entry into Tafilet, which now was almost in his reach not two days distant, the sun beating on his head, the water almost boiling in the bowl, hungry and footsore, and in the state betwixt waking and sleep into which those who smoke hemp on journeys often get, he branched away upon a trail leading towards the south. Between the oases of Todghra and Ferkla, nothing but stone and sand, black stones on yellow sand; sand, and yet more sand, and then again stretches of blackish rocks with a suddra bush or two, and here and there a colocynth, bitter and beautiful as love or life, smiling up at the traveller from amongst the stones. Towards mid-day the path led towards a sandy tract all overgrown with sandrac bushes and crossed by trails of jackals and hyenas, then it quite disappeared, and Amarabat waking from his dream saw he was lost. Like a good shepherd, his first



## *The Gold Fish*

thought was for his fish; for he imagined the last few hours of sun had made them faint, and one of them looked heavy and swam sideways, and the rest kept rising to the surface in an uneasy way. Not for a moment was Amarabat frightened, but looked about for some known landmark, and finding none started to go back on his trail. But to his horror the wind which always sweeps across the Sahara had covered up his tracks, and on the stony paths which he had passed his feet had left no prints. Then Amarabat, the first moments of despair passed by, took a long look at the horizon, tightened his belt, pulled up his slipper heels, covered his precious bowl with a corner of his robe, and started doggedly back upon the road he thought he traversed on the deceitful path. How long he trotted, what he endured, whether the fish died first, or if he drank, or, faithful to the last, thirsting met death, no one can say. Most likely wandering in the waste of sandhills and of suddra bushes he stumbled on, smoking his hashish while it lasted, turning to Mecca at the time of prayer, and trotting on more feebly (for he was born to run), till he sat down beneath the sun-dried bushes where the Shinghiti on his Mehari found him dead beside the trail. Under a stunted sandarac tree, the head turned to the east, his body lay, swollen and distorted by the pangs of thirst, the tongue protruding rough as a parrot's, and beside him lay the seven golden fish, once bright and shining as the pure gold when the goldsmith pours it molten from his pot, but now turned black



### *The Gold Fish*

and bloated, stiff, dry, and dead. Life the mysterious, the mocking, the inscrutable, unseizable, the uncomprehended essence of nothing and of everything, had fled, both from the faithful messenger and from his fish. But the Khalifa's parting caution had been well obeyed, for by the tree, unbroken, the crystal bowl still glistened beautiful as gold, in the fierce rays of the Saharan sun.

## *A Hegira*

THE giant cypresses, tall even in the time of Montezuma, the castle of Chapultepec upon its rock (an island in the plain of Mexico), the panorama of the great city backed by the mountain range; the two volcanoes, the Popocatepetl and the Istacihuatl, and the lakes; the tigers in their cages, did not interest me so much as a small courtyard, in which, ironed and guarded, a band of Indians of the Apache tribe were kept confined. Six warriors, a woman and a boy, captured close to Chihuahua, and sent to Mexico, the Lord knows why; for generally an Apache captured was shot at once, following the frontier rule, which without difference of race was held on both sides of the Rio Grande, that a good Indian must needs be dead.

Silent and stoical the warriors sat, not speaking once in a whole day, communicating but by signs; naked except the breech-clout; their eyes apparently opaque, and looking at you without sight, but seeing everything; and their demeanour less reassuring than that of the tigers in the cage hard by. All could speak Spanish if they liked, some a word or two of English, but no one heard them say a word in either tongue. I asked the nearest if he was a Mescalero, and

## *A Hegira*

received the answer: "Mescalero-hay," and for a moment a gleam shone through their eyes, but vanished instantly, as when the light dies out of the wire in an electric lamp. The soldier at the gate said they were "brutes"; all sons of dogs, infidels, and that for his part he could not see why the "Gobierno" went to the expense of keeping them alive. He thought they had no sense; but in that showed his own folly, and acted after the manner of the half-educated man the whole world over, who knowing he can read and write thinks that the savage who cannot do so is but a fool; being unaware that, in the great book known as the world, the savage often is the better scholar of the two.

But five-and-twenty years ago the Apache nation, split into its chief divisions of Mescaleros, Jicarillas, Coyoteros, and Lipanes, kept a great belt of territory almost five hundred miles in length, and of about thirty miles in breadth, extending from the bend of the Rio Gila to El Paso, in a perpetual war. On both sides of the Rio Grande no man was safe; farms were deserted, cattle carried off, villages built by the Spaniards, and with substantial brick-built churches, mouldered into decay; mines were unworkable, and horses left untended for a moment were driven off in open day; so bold the thieves, that at one time they had a settled month for plundering, which they called openly the Moon of the Mexicans, though they did not on that account suspend their operations at other seasons of the year. Cochise and Mangas-Coloradas, Naked Horse, Cuchillo Negro, and

## *A Hegira*

others of their chiefs, were once far better known upon the frontiers than the chief senators of the congresses of either of the two republics; and in some instances these chiefs showed an intelligence, knowledge of men and things, which in another sphere would certainly have raised them high in the estimation of mankind.

The Shis-Inday (the people of the woods), their guttural language, with its curious monosyllable "hay" which they tacked on to everything, as "oro-hay" and "plata-hay"; their strange democracy, each man being chief of himself, and owing no allegiance to any one upon the earth; all now have passed away, destroyed and swallowed up by the "In-day pindah lichoyi" (the men of the white eyes), as they used to call the Americans and all those northerners who ventured into their territory to look for "yellow iron." I saw no more of the Apaches, and, except once, never again met any one of them; but as I left the place the thought came to my mind: if any of them succeed in getting out, I am certain that the six or seven hundred miles between them and their country will be as nothing to them, and that their journey thither will be marked with blood.

At Huehuetoca I joined the mule-train, doing the twenty miles which in those days was all the extent of railway in the country to the north, and lost my pistol in a crowd just as I stepped into the train, some "lepero" having abstracted it out of my belt when I was occupied in helping five strong men to get my horse into a cattle-truck. From Huehuetoca

## *A Hegira*

we marched to Tula, and there camped for the night, sleeping in a "mesón," built like an Eastern fondak round a court, and with a well for watering the beasts in the centre of the yard. I strolled about the curious town, in times gone by the Aztec capital, looked at the churches, built like fortresses, and coming back to the mesón before I entered the cell-like room without a window, and with a plaster bench on which to spread one's saddle and one's rugs, I stopped to talk with a knot of travellers feeding their animals on barley and chopped straw, grouped round a fire, and the whole scene lit up and rendered Rembrandtesque by the fierce glow of an ocote torch. So talking of the Alps and Apennines, or, more correctly, speaking of the Sierra Madre, and the mysterious region known as the Bolson de Mapimi, a district in those days as little known as is the Sus today, a traveller drew near. Checking his horse close by the fire, and getting off it gingerly, for it was almost wild, holding the hair mecate in his hand, he squatted down, the horse snorting and hanging back and setting rifle and machete jingling upon the saddle, he began to talk.

"Ave María purísima, had we heard the news?" What! a new revolution? Had Lerdo de Tejada reappeared again? or had Cortinas made another raid on Brownsville? the Indios Bravos harried Chihuahua? or had the silver "conduct" coming from the mines been robbed? "Nothing of this, but a voice ran (*corría una voz*) that the Apache in-

fidels confined in the courtyard of the castle of Chapultepec had broken loose. Eight of them, six warriors, a woman and a boy, had slipped their fetters, murdered two of the guard, and were supposed to be somewhere not far from Tula, and," as he thought, "making for the Bolson de Mapimi, the deserts of the Rio Gila, or the recesses of the mountains of the Santa Rosa range."

Needless to say, this put all in the mesón almost beside themselves; for the terror that the Indians inspired was at that time so real, that had the eight forlorn and helpless infidels appeared I verily believe they would have killed us all. Not that we were not brave, well armed—in fact, all loaded down with arms, carrying rifles and pistols, swords stuck between our saddle-girths, and generally so fortified as to resemble walking arsenals. But valour is a thing of pure convention, and these men who would have fought like lions against marauders of their own race, scarce slept that night for thinking on the dangers which they ran by the reported presence of those six naked men. The night passed by without alarm, as was to be expected, seeing that the courtyard wall of the mesón was at least ten feet high, and the gate solid ahuehuate clamped with iron, and padlocked like a jail. At the first dawn, or rather at the first false dawn, when the fallacious streaks of pink flash in the sky and fade again to night, all were afoot. Horsemen rode out, sitting erect in their peaked saddles, toes stuck out and thrust into their curiously stamped toe-leathers; their cha-



## *A Hegira*

parreras giving to their legs a look of being cased in armour, their poblano hats, with bands of silver or of tinsel, balanced like haloes on their heads.

Long trains of donkeys, driven by Indians dressed in leather, and bareheaded, after the fashion of their ancestors, crawled through the gate laden with pulque, and now and then a single Indian followed by his wife set off on foot, carrying a crate of earthenware by a broad strap depending from his head. Our caravan, consisting of six two-wheeled mule-carts, drawn by a team of six or sometimes eight gaily harnessed mules, and covered with a tilt made from the istle, creaked through the gate. The great mesón remained deserted, and by degrees, as a ship leaves the coast, we struck into the wild and stony desert country, which, covered with a whitish dust of alkali, makes Tula an oasis; then the great church sank low, and the tall palm trees seemed to grow shorter; lastly church, palms and towers, and the green fields planted with aloes, blended together and sank out of sight, a faint white misty spot marking their whereabouts, till at last it too faded and melted into the level plain.

Travellers in a perpetual stream we met journeying to Mexico, and every now and then passed a straw-thatched jacal, where women sat selling "atole," that is a kind of stir-about of pine-nut meal and milk, and dishes seasoned hot with red pepper, with tortillas made on the metate of the Aztecs, to serve as bread and spoons. The infidels, it seemed,

## *A Hegira*

had got ahead of us, and when we slept had been descried making towards the north; two of them armed with bows which they had roughly made with sticks, the string twisted out of istle, and the rest with clubs, and what astonished me most was that behind them trotted a white dog. Outside San Juan del Rio, which we reached upon the second day, it seemed that in the night the homing Mescaleros had stolen a horse, and two of them mounting upon him had ridden off, leaving the rest of the forlorn and miserable band behind. How they had lived so far in the scorched alkali-covered plains, how they managed to conceal themselves by day, or how they steered by night, no one could tell; for the interior Mexican knows nothing of the desert craft, and has no idea that there is always food of some kind for an Apache, either by digging roots, snaring small animals, or at the last resort by catching locusts or any other insect he can find. Nothing so easy as to conceal themselves; for amongst grass eight or nine inches high, they drop, and in an instant, even as you look, are lost to sight, and if hard pressed sometimes escape attention by standing in a cactus grove, and, stretching out their arms, look so exactly like the plant that you may pass close to them and be unaware, till their bow twangs, and an obsidian-headed arrow whistles through the air.

Our caravan rested a day outside San Juan del Rio to shoe the mules, repair the harness, and for the muleteers to go to mass or visit the poblana girls, who with flowers

## *A Hegira*

in their hair leaned out of every balcony of the half-Spanish, half-Oriental-looking town, according to their taste. Not that the halt lost time, for travellers all know that "to hear mass and to give barley to your beasts loses no tittle of the day."

San Juan, the river almost dry, and trickling thirstily under its red stone bridges; the fields of aloes, the poplars, and the stunted palms; its winding street in which the houses, overhanging, almost touch; its population, which seemed to pass their time lounging wrapped in striped blankets up against the walls, was left behind. The pulque-aloes and the sugar-canes grew scarcer, the road more desolate as we emerged into the "tierra fría" of the central plain, and all the time the Sierra Madre, jagged and menacing, towered in the west. In my mind's eye I saw the Mescaleros trotting like wolves all through the night along its base, sleeping by day in holes, killing a sheep or goat when chance occurred, and following one another silent and stoical in their tramp towards the north.

Days followed days as in a ship at sea; the wagons rolling on across the plains; and I jogging upon my horse, half sleeping in the sun, or stretched at night half dozing on a tilt, almost lost count of time. Somewhere between San Juan del Rio and San Luis Potosi we learned two of the Indians had been killed, but that the four remaining were still pushing onward, and in a little while we met a body of armed men carrying two ghastly heads tied by their scalp-

## *A Hegira*

locks to the saddle-bow. Much did the slayers vaunt their prowess; telling how in a wood at break of day they had fallen in with all the Indians seated round a fire, and that whilst the rest fled, two had sprung on them, as they said, "after the fashion of wild beasts, armed one with a stick, and the other with a stone, and by God's grace," and here the leader crossed himself, "their aim had been successful, and the two sons of dogs had fallen, but most unfortunately the rest during the fight had managed to escape."

San Luis Potosi, the rainless city, once world-renowned for wealth, and even now full of fine buildings, churches and palaces, and with a swarming population of white-clothed Indians squatting to sell their trumpery in the great market-square, loomed up amongst its fringe of gardens, irrigated lands, its groves of pepper trees, its palms, its wealth of flowering shrubs; its great white domes, giving an air of Bagdad or of Fez, shone in the distance, then grew nearer, and at last swallowed us up, as wearily we passed through the outskirts of the town, and halted underneath the walls.

The city, then an oasis in the vast plateau of Anahuac (now but a station on a railway-line), a city of enormous distances, of gurgling water led in stucco channels by the side of every street, of long expanses of adobe walls, of immense plazas, of churches and of bells, of countless convents; hedged in by mountains to the west, mouth of the "tierra caliente" to the east, and to the north the stopping-

## *A Hegira*

place for the long trains of wagons carrying cotton from the States; wrapped in a mist as of the Middle Ages, lay sleeping in the sun. On every side the plain lapped like an ocean, and the green vegetation round the town stopped so abruptly that you could step almost at once from fertile meadows into a waste of whitish alkali.

Above the town, in a foothill of the Sierra Madre about three leagues away, is situated the "Enchanted City," never yet fouled by the foot of man, but yet existent, and believed in by all those who follow that best part of history, the traditions which have come down to us from the times when men were wise, and when imagination governed judgment, as it should do today, being the noblest faculty of the human mind. Either want of time, or that belittling education from which few can escape, prevented me from visiting the place. Yet I still think, if rightly sought, the city will be found, and I feel sure the Mescaleros passed the night not far from it, and perhaps looking down upon San Luis Potosi cursed it, after the fashion that the animals may curse mankind for its injustice to them.

Tired of its squares, its long dark streets, its hum of people; and possessed perhaps with that nostalgia of the desert which comes so soon to all who once have felt its charm when cooped in bricks, we set our faces northward about an hour before the day, passed through the gates and rolled into the plains. The mules well rested shook their bells, the leagues soon dropped behind, the muleteers sing-

## *A Hegira*

ing "La Pasadita," or an interminable song about a "Gachupin" \* who loved a nun.

The Mescaleros had escaped our thoughts—that is, the muleteers thought nothing of them; but I followed their every step, saw them crouched round their little fire, roasting the roots of wild mescal; marked them upon the march in single file, their eyes fixed on the plain, watchful and silent as they were phantoms gliding to the north.

Crossing a sandy tract, the Capataz, who had long lived in the Pimeria Alta, and amongst the Maricopas on the Gila, drew up his horse and pointing to the ground said: "Viva Mexico!—look at these footmarks in the sand. They are the infidels; see where the men have trod; here is the woman's print and this the boy's. Look how their toes are all turned in, unlike the tracks of Christians. This trail is a day old, and yet how fresh! See where the boy has stumbled—thanks to the Blessed Virgin they must all be tired, and praise to God will die upon the road, either by hunger or some Christian hand." All that he spoke of was no doubt visible to him, but through my want of faith, or perhaps lack of experience, I saw but a faint trace of naked footsteps in the sand. Such as they were, they seemed the shadow of a ghost, unstable and unreal, and struck me after the fashion that it strikes one when a man holds up a cane and tells you gravely, without a glimmering of the strangeness of

\* It had a chorus reflecting upon convent discipline:

"For though the convent rule was strict and tight,  
She had her exits and her entrances by night."



the fact, that it came from Japan, actually grew there, and had leaves and roots, and was as little thought of as a mere ash-plant growing in a copse.

At an hacienda upon the road, just where the trail leads off upon one hand to Matehuala, and on the other to Rio Verde, and the hot countries of the coast, we stopped to pass the hottest hours in sleep. All was excitement; men came in, their horses flecked with foam; others were mounting, and all armed to the teeth, as if the Yankees had crossed the Rio Grande, and were marching on the place. "Los Indios! sí, señor," they had been seen, only last night, but such the valour of the people of the place, they had passed on doing no further damage than to kill a lamb. No chance of sleep in such a turmoil of alarm; each man had his own plan, all talked at once, most of them were half drunk, and when our Capataz asked dryly if they had thought of following the trail, a silence fell on all. By this time, owing to the horsemen galloping about, the trail was cut on every side, and to have followed it would have tried the skill of an Apache tracker; but just then upon the plain a cloud of dust was seen. Nearer it came, and then out of the midst of it horses appeared, arms flashed, and then nearing the place five or six men galloped up to the walls, and stopped their horses with a jerk. "What news? have you seen anything of the Apaches?" and the chief rider of the gallant band, getting off slowly, and fastening up his horse, said, with an air of dignity: "At the encrucijada, four leagues

## *A Hegira*

along the road, you will find one of them. We came upon him sitting on a stone, too tired to move, called on him to surrender, but Indians have no sense, so he came at us tired as he was, and we, being valiant, fired, and he fell dead. Then, that the law should be made manifest to all, we hung his body by the feet to a huisaché tree." Then compliments broke out and "Vivan los valientes!" "Viva Mexico!" "Mueran los Indios salvajes!" and much of the same sort, whilst the five valiant men modestly took a drink, saying but little, for true courage does not show itself in talk.

Leaving the noisy crew drinking confusion to their enemies, we rolled into the plain. Four dusty leagues, and the huisaché tree growing by four cross trails came into sight. We neared it, and to a branch, naked except his breech-clout, covered with bullet-wounds, we saw the Indian hang. Half-starved he looked, and so reduced that from the bullet-holes but little blood had run; his feet were bloody, and his face hanging an inch or two above the ground distorted; flies buzzed about him, and in the sky a faint black line on the horizon showed that the vultures had already scented food.

We left the nameless warrior hanging on his tree, and took our way across the plain, well pleased both with the "valour" of his slayers and the position of affairs in general in the world at large. Right up and down the Rio Grande on both sides for almost a thousand miles the lonely cross

## *A Hegira*

upon some river-side, near to some thicket, or out in the wide plain, most generally is lettered "Killed by the Apaches," and in the game they played so long, and still held trumps in at the time I write of, they, too, paid for all errors, in their play, by death. But still it seemed a pity, savage as they were, that so much cunning, such stoical indifference to both death and life, should always finish as the warrior whom I saw hang by the feet from the huisaché, just where the road to Matchuala bifurcates, and the trail breaks off to El Jarral. And so we took our road, passed La Parida, Matchuala, El Catorce, and still the sterile plateau spread out like a vast sea, the sparse and stunted bushes in the constant mirage looming at times like trees, at others seeming just to float above the sand; and as we rolled along, the mules struggling and straining in the whitish dust, we seemed to lose all trace of the Apaches; and at the lone hacienda or rare villages no one had heard of them, and the mysterious hegira of the party, now reduced to three, left no more traces of its passing than water which has closed upon the passage of a fish.

Gomez Farias, Parras, El Llano de la Guerra, we passed alternately, and at length Saltillo came in sight, its towers standing up upon the plain after the fashion of a lighthouse in the sea; the bull-ring built under the Viceroy's looking like a fort; and then the plateau of Anahuac finished abruptly, and from the ramparts of the willow-shaded town the great green plains stretched out towards Texas in a vast

## *A Hegira*

panorama; whilst upon the west in the dim distance frowned the serrated mountains of Santa Rosa, and further still the impenetrable fastnesses of the Bolson de Mapimi.

Next day we took the road for Monterey, descending in a day by the rough path known as "la cuesta de los fierros," from the cold plateau to a land of palms, of cultivation, orange groves, of fruit trees, olive gardens, a balmy air filled with the noise of running waters; and passing underneath the Cerro de la Silla which dominates the town, slept peacefully far from all thoughts of Indians and of perils of the road, in the great caravansary which at that time was the chief glory of the town of Monterey. The city with its shady streets, its alameda planted with palm trees, and its plaza all decorated with stuccoed plaster seats painted pale pink, and upon which during both day and night half of the population seemed to lounge, lay baking in the sun.

Great teams of wagons driven by Texans creaked through the streets, the drivers dressed in a *défroque* of old town clothes, often a worn frock-coat and rusty trousers stuffed into cowboy boots, the whole crowned with an ignominious battered hat, and looking, as the Mexicans observed, like "*pantomimas, que salen en las fiestas.*" Mexicans from down the coast, from Tamaulipas, Tuxpan, Vera Cruz and Guatzeocalcos ambled along on horses all ablaze with silver; and to complete the picture, a tribe of Indians, the Kickapoos, who had migrated from the north, and who occasionally rode through the town in single file, their rifles in their

hands, and looking at the shops half longingly, half frightened, passed along without a word.

But all the varied peoples, the curious half-wild, half-patriarchal life, the fruits and flowers, the strangeness of the place, could not divert my thoughts from the three lone pathetic figures, followed by their dog, which in my mind's eye I saw making northward, as a wild goose finds its path in spring, leaving no traces of its passage by the way. I wondered what they thought of, how they looked upon the world, if they respected all they saw of civilized communities upon their way, or whether they pursued their journey like a horse let loose returning to his birthplace, anxious alone about arriving at the goal. So Monterey became a memory; the Cerro de la Silla last vanishing, when full five leagues upon the road. The dusty plains all white with alkali, the grey-green sage-bushes, the salt and crystal-looking rivers, the Indians bending under burdens, and the women sitting at the cross-roads selling tortillas—all now had changed. Through oceans of tall grass, by muddy rivers in which alligators basked, by bayous, resacas, and by "bottoms" of alluvial soil, in which grew cotton-woods, black-jack, and post-oak, with gigantic willows; through countless herds of half-wild horses, lighting the landscape with their colours, and through a rolling prairie with vast horizons bounded by faint blue mountain chains, we took our way. Out of the thickets of mezquite wild boars peered upon the path; rattlesnakes sounded their note of warning or lay basking in the

## *A Hegira*

sun; at times an antelope bounded across our track, and the rare villages were fortified with high mud walls, had gates, and sometimes drawbridges, for all the country we were passing through was subject to invasions of "los Indios Bravos," and no one rode a mile without the chance of an attack. When travellers met they zigzagged to and fro like battleships in the old days striving to get the "weather gauge," holding their horses tightly by the head, and interchanging salutations fifty yards away, though if they happened to be Texans and Mexicans they only glared, or perhaps yelled an obscenity at one another in their different tongues. Advertisements upon the trees informed the traveller that the place to stop at was the "Old Buffalo Camp" in San Antonio, setting forth its whisky, its perfect safety both for man and beast, and adding curtly it was only a short four hundred miles away. Here for the first time in our journey we sent out a rider about half-a-mile ahead to scan the route, ascend the little hills, keep a sharp eye on "Indian sign," and give us warning by a timely shot, all to dismount, corral the wagons, and be prepared for an attack of Indians, or of the roaming bands of rascals who like pirates wandered on the plains. Dust made us anxious, and smoke ascending in the distance set us all wondering if it was Indians, or a shepherd's fire; at halting time no one strayed far from camp, and we sat eating with our rifles by our sides, whilst men on horseback rode round the mules, keeping them well in sight, as shepherds watch their sheep.



## *A Hegira*

About two leagues from Juarez a traveller bloody with spurring passed us carrying something in his hand; he stopped and held out a long arrow with an obsidian head, painted in various colours, and feathered in a peculiar way. A consultation found it to be "Apache," and the man galloped on to take it to the governor of the place to tell him Indians were about, or, as he shouted (following the old Spanish catchword), "there were Moors upon the coast."

Juarez we slept at, quite secure within the walls; started at daybreak, crossing the swiftly running river just outside the town, at the first streak of light; journeyed all day, still hearing nothing of the retreating Mescaleros, and before evening reached Las Navas, which we found astir, all lighted up, and knots of people talking excitedly, whilst in the plaza the whole population seemed to be afoot. At the long wooden tables set about with lights, where in a Mexican town at sundown an *al fresco* meal of kid stewed in red pepper, tamales and tortillas, is always laid, the talk was furious, and each man gave his opinion at the same time, after the fashion of the Russian *mir*, or as it may be that we shall yet see done during debates in Parliament, so that all men may have a chance to speak, and yet escape the ignominy of their words being caught, set down, and used against them, after the present plan. The Mescaleros had been seen passing about a league outside the town. A shepherd lying hidden, watching his sheep, armed with a rifle, had spied them, and reported that they had passed close to him; the woman

## *A Hegira*

coming last and carrying in her arms a little dog; and he "thanked God and all His holy saints who had miraculously preserved his life." After the shepherd's story, in the afternoon firing had been distinctly heard towards the small rancho of Las Crucecitas, which lay about three leagues further on upon the road. All night the din of talk went on, and in the morning when we started on our way, full half the population went with us to the gate, all giving good advice; to keep a good look-out, if we saw dust to be certain it was Indians driving the horses stolen from Las Crucecitas, then to get off at once, corral the wagons, and above all to put our trust in God. This we agreed to do, but wondered why out of so many valiant men not one of them proffered assistance, or volunteered to mount his horse and ride with us along the dangerous way.

The road led upwards towards some foothills, set about with scrubby palms; not fifteen miles away rose the dark mountains of the Santa Rosa chain, and on a little hill the rancho stood, flat-roofed and white, and seemingly not more than a short league away, so clear the light, and so immense the scale of everything upon the rolling plain. I knew that in the mountains the three Indians were safe, as the whole range was Indian territory; and as I saw them struggling up the slopes, the little dog following them footsore, hanging down its head, or carried as the shepherd said in the "she-devil's" arms, I wished them luck after their hegira, planned with such courage, carried out so well, had

ended, and they were back again amongst the tribe.

Just outside Crucecitas we met a Texan who, as he told us, owned the place, and lived in "kornkewbinage with a native gal," called, as he said, "Pastory," who it appeared of all females he had ever met was the best hand to bake "tortillers," and whom, had she not been a Catholic, he would have made his wife. All this without a question on our part, and sitting sideways on his horse, scanning the country from the corner of his eye. He told us that he had "had right smart of an Indian trouble here yesterday just about afternoon. Me and my 'vaquerys' were around looking for an estray horse, just six of us, when close to the ranch we popped kermash right upon three red devils, and opened fire at once. I hed a Winchester, and at the first fire tumbled the buck; he fell right in his tracks, and jest as I was taking off his scalp, I'm doggoned if the squaw and the young devil didn't come at us jest like grizzly bars. Wal, yes, killed 'em, o' course, and anyhow the young 'un would have growed up; but the squaw I'm sort of sorry about. I never could bear to kill a squaw, though I've often seen it done. Naow here's the all-firedest thing yer ever heard; jes' as I was turning the bodies over with my foot a little Indian dog flies at us like a 'painter,' the varmint, the condemndest little buffler I ever struck. I was for shootin' him, but Pastory—that's my kornkewbyne—she up and says it was a shame. Wal, we had to bury them, for dead Injun stinks worse than turkey-buzzard, and the dodgasted little

dog is sitting on the grave, 'pears like he's froze, leastwise he hasn't moved since sun-up, when we planted the whole crew."

Under a palm tree not far from the house the Indians' grave was dug; upon it, wretched and draggled, sat the little dog. "Pastory" tried to catch it all day long, being kind-hearted though a "kornkewbyne"; but, failing, said "God was not willing," and retired into the house. The hours seemed days in the accursed place till the sun rose, gilding the unreachd Santa Rosa mountains, and bringing joy into the world. We harnessed up the mules, and started silently out on the lonely road; turning, I checked my horse, and began moralizing on all kinds of things; upon tenacity of purpose, the futility of life, and the inexorable fate which mocks mankind, making all effort useless, whilst still urging us to strive. Then the grass rustled, and across an open space a small white object trotted, looking furtively around, threw up its head and howled, ran to and fro as if it sought for something, howled dismally again, and after scratching in the ground, squatted dejectedly on the fresh-turned-up earth which marked the Indians' grave.

## *La Pulpería*

**I**T may have been the Flor de Mayo, Rosa del Sur, or Tres de Junio, or again but have been known as the Pulpería upon the Huesos, or the Esquina on the Napostá. But let its name have been what chance or the imagination of some Neapolitan or Basque had given it, I see it, and seeing it, dismounting, fastening my redomón to the palenque, enter, loosen my facón, feel if my pistol is in its place, and calling out "Carlón," receive my measure of strong, heady red Spanish wine in a tin cup. Passing it round to the company, who touch it with their lips to show their breeding, I seem to feel the ceaseless little wind which always blows upon the southern plains, stirring the dust upon the pile of fleeces in the court, and whistling through the wooden reja where the pulpero stands behind his counter with his pile of bottles close beside him, ready for what may chance. For outward visible signs, a low, squat, mud-built house, surrounded by a shallow ditch on which grew stunted cactuses, and with paja brava sticking out of the adobe of the overhanging eaves. Brown, sun-baked, dusty-looking, it stands up, an island in the sea of waving hard-stemmed grasses which the improving settler passes all his life in a vain fight to improve away; and make his own particular

## *La Pulpería*

estancia an Anglo-Saxon Eden of trim sheep-cropped turf, set here and there with "agricultural implements," broken and thrown aside, and, though imported at great trouble and expense, destined to be replaced by ponderous native ploughs hewn from the solid ñandubay, and which, of course, inevitably prove the superiority of the so-called unfit. For inward graces, the reja before which runs a wooden counter at which the flower of the Gauchage of the district lounge, or sit with their toes sticking through their potro boots, swinging their legs and keeping time to the "cielito" of the payador upon his cracked guitar, the strings eked out with fine-cut thongs of mare's hide, by jingling their spurs.

Behind the wooden grating, sign in the Pampa of the eternal hatred betwixt those who buy and those who sell, some shelves of yellow pine, on which are piled ponchos from Leeds, ready-made calzoncillos, alpargatas, figs, sardines, raisins, bread—for bread upon the Pampa used to be eaten only at Pulperías—saddle-cloths, and in a corner the "botillería," where vermuth, absinthe, square-faced gin, Carlon, and Vino Seco stand in a row, with the barrel of Brazilian caña, on the top of which the pulpero ostentatiously parades his pistol and his knife. Outside, the tracks led through the biscacheras, all converging after the fashion of the rails at a junction; at the palenque before the door stood horses tied by strong raw-hide cabrestos, hanging their heads in the fierce sun, shifting from leg to leg, whilst their



## *La Pulpería*

companions, hobbled, plunged about, rearing themselves on their hind-legs to jump like kangaroos.

Now and then Gauchos rode up occasionally, their iron spurs hanging off their naked feet, held by a raw-hide thong; some dressed in black bombachas and vicuña ponchos, their horses weighted down with silver, and prancing sideways as their riders sat immovable, but swaying from the waist upwards like willows in a wind. Others, again, on lean young colts, riding upon a saddle covered with sheepskin, gripping the small hide stirrup with their toes and forcing them up to the posts with shouts of "Ah bagual!" "Ah Pehuelche!" "Ahijuna!" and with resounding blows of their short, flat-lashed whips, which they held by a thong between their fingers or slipped upon their wrists, then grasping their frightened horses by the ears, got off as gingerly as a cat jumps from a wall. From the rush-thatched, mud-walled *ranchería* at the back the women, who always haunt the outskirts of a *pulpería* in the districts known as "tierra adentro" (the inside country), Indians and semi-whites, mulatresses, and now and then a stray Basque or Italian girl turned out, to share the quantity they considered love with all mankind.

But gin and politics, with horses' marks, accounts of fights, and recollections of the last revolution, kept men for the present occupied with serious things, so that the women were constrained to sit and smoke, drink *maté*, plait each

## *La Pulpería*

other's hair (searching it diligently the while), and wait until Carlon with *Vino Seco*, square-faced rum, cachaza, and the medicated log-wood broth, which on the Pampa passes for "*Vino Francés*," had made men sensible to their softer charms. That which in Europe we call love and think by inventing it that we have cheated God, who clearly planted nothing but an instinct of self-continuation in mankind, as in the other animals, seems either to be in embryo, waiting for economic advancement to develop it; or is perhaps not even dormant in countries such as those in whose vast plains the pulpería stands for club, exchange, for meeting-place, and represents all that in other lands men think they find in Paris or in London, and choose to dignify under the style of intellectual life. Be it far from me to think that we have bettered the Creator's scheme; or, by the substitution of our polyandry for polygamy, bettered the position of women, or in fact done anything but changed and made more complex that which at first was clear to understand.

But, be that as it may and without dogmatism, our love, our vices, our rendering wicked things natural in themselves, our secrecy, our pruriency, adultery, and all the myriad ramifications of things sexual, without which no novelist could earn his bread, fall into nothing, except there is a press-directed public opinion, laws, by-laws, leaded type and headlines, so to speak, to keep them up. True, nothing of all this entered our heads as we sat drinking, listening to a contest

## *La Pulpería*

of minstrelsy "por contrapunto" betwixt a Gaucho payador and a "matrero negro" of great fame, who each in turn taking the cracked changango in their lasso-hardened hands, plucked at its strings in such a style as to well illustrate the saying that to play on the guitar is not a thing of science, but requires but perseverance, hard finger-tips, and an unusual development of strength in the right wrist. Negro and payador each sang alternately; firstly old Spanish love songs handed down from before the independence, quavering and high; in which Frasquita rhymed to chiquita, and one Cupido, whom I never saw in Pampa, loma, rincón, bolsón, or medano, in the Chañares, amongst the woods of ñandubay, the pajonales, sierras, cuchillas, or in all the land, figured and did nothing very special; flourished, and then departed in a high falsetto shake, a rough sweep of the hard brown fingers over the jarring strings forming his fitting epitaph.

The story of "El Fausto," and how the Gaucho, Aniceto, went to Buenos Ayres, saw the opera of "Faust," lost his puñal in the crush to take his seat, sat through the fearful play, saw face to face the enemy of man, described \* as being dressed in long stockings to the stifle-joint, eyebrows like arches for tilting at the wing, and eyes like water-holes in a dry river bed, succeeded, and the negro took up the

\* "Medias hasta la berija  
Con cada ojo como un charco,  
Y cada ceja era un arco  
Para correr la sortija."

## *La Pulperia*

challenge and rejoined. He told how, after leaving town, that Aniceto mounted on his Overo rosao,\* fell in with his "compadre," told all his wondrous tale, and how they finished off their bottle and left it floating in the river like a buoy.

The payador, not to be left behind, and after having tuned his guitar and put the *cejilla* on the strings, launched into the strange life of Martin Fierro, type of the Gauchos on the frontier, related his multifarious fights, his escapades, and love affairs, and how at last he, his friend, Don Cruz, saw on an evening the last houses as, with a stolen *tropilla* of good horses, they passed the frontier to seek the Indians' tents. The death of Cruz, the combat of Martin with the Indian chief—he with his knife, the Indian with the *bolas*—and how Martin slew him and rescued the captive woman, who prayed to heaven to aid the Christian, with the body of her dead child, its hands secured in a string made out of one of its own entrails, lying before her as she watched the varying fortunes of the fight, he duly told. La Vuelta de Martín and the strange maxims of Tío Viscacha, that Pampa cynic whose maxim was never to ride up to a house where dogs were thin, and who set forth that arms are necessary, but no man can tell when, were duly recorded by the combatants, listened to and received

\* "En un overo rosao, flete lindo y parejito,  
Cayó al bajo al trotecito, y lindamente sentao.  
Un paisano del Bragao, de apelativo Laguna,  
Mozo ginetazo ahijuna, como creo que no hay otro  
Capaz a llevar un potro a sofrenarlo en la luna."

### *La Pulpería*

as new and authentic by the audience, till at last the singing and the frequent glasses of Carlon made payador and negro feel that the time had come to leave off contrapunto and decide which was most talented in music, with their *facóns*. A personal allusion to the colour of the negro's skin, a retort calling in question the nice conduct of the sister of the payador, and then two savages foaming at the mouth, their ponchos wrapped round their arms, their bodies bent so as to protect their vitals, and their knives quivering like snakes, stood in the middle of the room. The company withdrew themselves into the smallest space, stood on the tops of casks, and at the door the faces of the women looked in delight, whilst the pulpero, with a pistol and a bottle in his hands, closed down his grating and was ready for whatever might befall. "Negro," "Ahijuna," "Miente," "carajo," and the knives flash and send out sparks as the returns *de tic au tac jar* the fighters' arms up to the shoulder-joints. In a moment all is over, and from the payador's right arm the blood drops in a stream on the mud floor, and all the company step out and say the negro is a "valiente," "muy guapetón," and the two adversaries swear friendship over a tin mug of gin. But all the time during the fight, and whilst outside the younger men had ridden races bareback, making false starts to tire each other's horses out, practising all the tricks they knew, as kicking their adversary's horse in the chest, riding beside their opponent and trying to lift him from his seat by placing their foot underneath his and

## *La Pulpería*

pushing upwards, an aged Gaucho had gradually become the centre figure of the scene.

Seated alone he muttered to himself, occasionally broke into a falsetto song, and now and then half drawing out his knife, glared like a tiger-cat, and shouted "Viva Rosas," though he knew that chieftain had been dead for twenty years.

Tall and with straggling iron-grey locks hanging down his back, a broad-brimmed plush hat kept in its place by a black ribbon with two tassels under his chin, a red silk Chinese handkerchief tied loosely round his neck and hanging with a point over each shoulder-blade, he stood dressed in his chiripa and poncho, like a mad prophet amongst the motley crew. Upon his feet were potro boots, that is the skin taken off the hind-leg of a horse, the hock-joint forming the heel and the hide softened by pounding with a mallet, the whole tied with a garter of a strange pattern woven by the Indians, leaving the toes protruding to catch the stirrups, which as a domador he used, made of a knot of hide. Bound round his waist he had a set of ostrich balls covered in lizard skin, and his broad belt made of carpincho leather was kept in place by five Brazilian dollars, and through it stuck a long facón with silver handle shaped like a half-moon, and silver sheath fitted with a catch to grasp his sash. Whilst others talked of women or of horses, alluding to their physical perfections, tricks or predilections, their hair, hocks, eyes, brands or peculiarities, discussing them alternately with



### *La Pulpería*

the appreciation of men whose tastes are simple but yet know all the chief points of interest in both subjects, he sat and drank. Tío Cabrera (said the others) is in the past, he thinks of times gone by; of the Italian girl whom he forced and left with her throat cut and her tongue protruding, at the pass of the Puan; of how he stole the Indian's horse<sup>s</sup>, and of the days when Rosas ruled the land. Pucha, compadre, those were times, eh? Before the "nations," English, Italian and Neapolitan, with French and all the rest, came here to learn the taste of meat, and ride, the "maturangos," in their own countries having never seen a horse. But though they talked at, yet they refrained from speaking to him, for he was old, and even the devil knows more because of years than because he is the devil, and they knew also that to kill a man was to Tío Cabrera as pleasant an exercise as for them to kill a sheep. But at last I, with the accumulated wisdom of my twenty years, holding a glass of caña in my hand, approached him, and inviting him to drink, said, not exactly knowing why, "Viva Urquiza," and then the storm broke out. His eyes flashed fire, and drawing his facón he shouted "Muera! . . . Viva Rosas," and drove his knife into the mud walls, struck on the counter with the flat of the blade, foamed at the mouth, broke into snatches of obscene and long-forgotten songs, as "Viva Rosas! Muera Urquiza, dale guasca en la petiza," whilst the rest, not heeding that I had a pistol in my belt, tried to restrain him by all means in their power. But he was maddened, yelled,

### *La Pulpería*

"Yes, I, Tío Cabrera, known also as el Cordero, tell you I know how to play the violin (a euphemism on the south Pampa for cutting throats). In Rosas' time, Viva el General, I was his right-hand man, and have dispatched many a Unitario dog either to Trapalanda or to hell. Caña, blood, Viva Rosas, Muera!" then tottering and shaking, his knife slipped from his hands and he fell on a pile of sheepskins with white foam exuding from his lips. Even the Gauchos, who took a life as other men take a cigar, and from their earliest childhood are brought up to kill, were dominated by his brute fury, and shrank to their horses in dismay. The pulpero murmured "salvaje" from behind his bars, the women trembled and ran to their *toldería*, holding each other by the hands, and the guitar-players sat dumb, fearing their instruments might come to harm. I, on the contrary, either impelled by the strange savagery inherent in men's blood or by some reason I cannot explain, caught the infection, and getting on my horse, a half-wild *redomón*, spurred him and set him plunging, and at each bound struck him with the flat edge of my *facón*, then shouting "Viva Rosas," galloped out furiously upon the plain.

## *Higginson's Dream*

THE world went well with Higginson; and about that time—say fifteen years ago—he found himself, his fortune made, settled down in Noumea. The group of islands which he had, as he said, rescued from barbarism, and in which he had opened the mines, made all the harbours, and laid out all the roads, looked to him as their Providence; and to crown the work, he had them placed under the French flag. Rich, décoré, respected, and with no worlds to conquer in particular, he still kept adding wealth to wealth; trading and doing what he considered useful work for all mankind in general, as if he had been poor.

Strange that a kindly man, a cosmopolitan, half French, half English, brought up in Australia, capable, active, pushing, and even not devoid of that interior grace: a speculative intellect, which usually militates against a man in the battle of his life, should think that roads, mines, harbours, havens, ships, bills of lading, telegraphs, tramways, a European flag, even the French flag itself, could compensate his islanders for loss of liberty. Stranger in his case than in the case of those who go, grown up with all the prejudices, limitations, circumscriptions and formalities of civilization become

### *Higginson's Dream*

chronic in them, and see in savage countries and wild peoples but dumping ground for European trash, and capabilities for the extension of the Roubaix or the Sheffield trade; for he had passed his youth amongst the islands, loved their women, gone spearing fish with their young men, had planted taro with them, drunk kava, learned their language, and become as expert as themselves in all their futile arts and exercises; knew their customs and was as one of them, living their life and thinking it the best.

'Tis said (Viera, I think, relates it) that in the last years of fighting for the possession of Teneriffe, and when Alonso de Lugo was hard pressed to hold his own against the last Mencey, Bencomo, a strange sickness known as the "modorra" seized the Guanches and killed more of them than were slain in all the fights. The whole land was covered with the dead, and once Alonso de Lugo met a woman sitting on the hill-side, who called out, "Where are you going, Christian? Why do you hesitate to take the land? the Guanches are all dead." The Spanish chroniclers say that the sickness came about by reason of a wet season, and that, coming as it did upon men weakened by privation, they fell into apathy and welcomed death as a deliverer. That may be so, and it is true that in hill-caves even today in the lone valleys by Icod el Alto their bodies still are found seated and with the head bowed on the arms, as if having sat down to mourn the afflictions of their race, God had been merciful for once and let them sleep. The chroniclers may have been

### *Higginson's Dream*

right, and the wet season, with despair, starvation and the hardships they endured, may have brought on the mysterious "modorra," the drowsy sickness, under which they fell. But it needs nothing but the presence of the conquering white man, decked in his shoddy clothes, armed with his gas-pipe gun, his Bible in his hand, schemes of benevolence deep rooted in his heart, his merchandise (that is, his whisky, gin and cotton cloths) securely stored in his corrugated iron-roofed sheds, and he himself active and persevering as a beaver or red ant, to bring about a sickness which, like the "modorra," exterminates the people whom he came to benefit, to bless, to rescue from their savagery, and to make them wise, just, beautiful, and as apt to differentiate evil from good as even he himself. So it would seem, act as we like, our presence is a curse to all those people who have preserved the primeval instincts of our race. Curious, and yet apparently inevitable, that our customs seem designed to carry death to all the so-called inferior races, whom at a bound we force to bridge a period which it has taken us a thousand years to pass.

In his prosperity, and even we may suppose during the Elysium of dining with sous-préfets in Noumea, and on the occasions when in Melbourne or in Sydney he once again consorted with Europeans, he always dreamed of a certain bay upon the coast far from Noumea, where in his youth he had spent six happy months with a small tribe, fishing and swimming, hunting, spearing fish, living on

### *Higginson's Dream*

taro and bananas, and having for a friend one Tean, son of a chief, a youth of his own age. The vision of the happy life came back to him; the dazzling beach, the heavy foliage of the palao and bread-fruit trees; the grove of coco-nuts, and the zigzag and intricate paths leading from hut to hut, which when a boy he traversed daily, knowing them all by instinct in the same way that horses in wild countries know how to return towards the place where they were born. And still the vision haunted him; not making him unhappy, for he was one of those who find relief from thought in work, but always there in the same way that the remembrance of a mean action is ever present, even when one has made atonement, or induced oneself to think it was not really mean, but rendered necessary by circumstances; or, in fact, when we imagine we have put to sleep that inward grasshopper which in our bosoms, blood, brain, stomach, or wheresoever it is situated, is louder or more faint according to our state of health, digestion, weakness, or what it is that makes us hear its chirp.

And so it was that cheap champagne seemed flat to him; the company of the yellow-haired and faded demi-mondaines whom Paris dumps upon New Caledonia insipid; the villas on the cliff outside Noumea vulgar; and the prosperity and progress of the place to which he had so much contributed, profitless and stale. Not that for a single instant he stopped working, planning and improving his estates, or missed a chance to acquire "town lots," or if a profitable



### *Higginson's Dream*

10,000 acres of good land with river frontage came into the market, hesitated for a moment to step in and buy. Now, though by this time he had long got past the need of actually trading with the natives at first hand, and kept, as rich men do, captains and secretaries and lawyers to do his lying for him, and only now and then would condescend to exercise himself in that respect when the stake was large enough to make the matter reputable, yet sometimes he would take a cruise in one of his own schooners and play at being poor. Nothing so tickles a man's vanity as to look back upon his semi-incredible past, and talk of the times when he had to live on sixpence a day, and to recount his breakfast on a penny roll and glass of milk, and then to put his hands upon his turtle-bloated stomach, smile a fat smile and say: "Ah, those were the days, then I was happy!" although he knows that at that halcyon period he was miserable, not perhaps so much from poverty, as from that envy which is as great a curse to poor men as is indigestion to the rich.

So running down the coast of New Caledonia in a schooner, trading in pearls and copra, he came one evening to a well-remembered bay. All seemed familiar to him, the low white beach, tall palm trees, coral reef with breakers thundering over it, and the still blue lagoon inside the clump of bread-fruit trees, the single tall grey stone just by the beach all graven over with strange characters, all struck a chord long dormant in his mind. So telling his skipper

### *Higginson's Dream*

to let go his anchor, he rowed himself ashore. On landing he was certain of the place; the tribe, about five hundred strong, ruled over by the father of his friend Tean, lived right along the bay, and scattered in palm-thatched huts throughout the district. Then he remembered a certain coco-nut palm he used to climb, a spring of water in a thicket of hibiscus, a little stream which he used to dam, and then divert the course to take the fish, and sitting down, all his past life came back to him, As he himself would say, "C'était le bon temps; pauvre Tean, il doit être Areki (chef) maintenant; sa sœur peut-être est morte ou mariée . . . elle m'aimait bien. . . ."

But this day-dream dispelled, it struck him that the place looked changed. Where were the long low huts in front of which he used to pass his idle hours stretched in a hammock, the little taro patches? The zigzag paths which used to run from house to house across the fields to the spring and to the turtle-pond were all grown up. Couch-grass and rank mimosa scrub, with here and there ropes of lianas, blocked them so that he rubbed his eyes and asked himself: Where is the tribe? Vainly he shouted, cooeed loudly; all was silent, and his own voice came back to him muffled and startling as it does when a man feels he is alone. At last, following one of the paths less grown up and obliterated than the rest, he entered a thick scrub, walked for a mile or two cutting lianas now and then with his jack-knife, stumbling through swamps, wading through mud, until in a little clearing he

### *Higginson's Dream*

came upon a hut, in front of which a man was digging yams. As many of the natives in New Caledonia speak English and few French, he called to him in English: "Where black man?" Resting upon his hoe, the man replied: "All dead." "Where Chief?" And the same answer: "Chief, he dead." "Tean, he dead?" "No, Tean Chief; he ill, die soon; Tean inside that house." And Higginson, not understanding, but feeling vaguely that his dream was shattered in some way he could not understand, called out: "Tean, oh, Tean, your friend Johnny here!" Then from the hut emerged a feeble man leaning upon a long curved stick, who gazed at him as he had seen a ghost. At last he said: "That you, John? I glad to see you once before I die." Whether they embraced, shook hands, rubbed noses, or what their greeting was is not recorded, for Higginson, in alluding to it, always used to say: "*C'est bête, mais le pauvre homme me faisait de la peine.*"

This was his sickness. "Me sick, John; why you wait so long? you no remember, so many years ago when we spear fish, you love my sister, she dead five years ago. . . . When me go *kaikai* (eat) piece sugar-cane, little bit perhaps fall on the ground, big bird he come eat bit of sugar-cane and eat my life."

Poor Higginson being a civilized man, with the full knowledge of all things good and evil contingent on his state, still was dismayed, but said: "No, Tean, I get plenty big gun; you savey when I shoot even a butterfly he fall. I

### *Higginson's Dream*

shoot big bird so that when you go kaikai he no eat pieces, and you get well again." Thus Higginson from his altitude argued with the semi-savage, thinking, as men will think, that even death can be kept off with words. But Tean smiled and said: "Johnny, you savey heap, but you no savey all. This time I die. You go shoot bird he turn into a mouse, and mouse eat all I eat, just the same bird." This rather staggered Higginson, and he felt his theories begin to vanish, and he began to feel a little angry; but really loving his old friend, he once more addressed himself to what he now saw might be a hopeless task.

"I go Noumea get big black cat, beautiful cat, all the same tiger—you savey tiger, Tean?—glossy and fat, long tail and yellow eyes; when he see mouse he eat him; you go to bed sleep, get up, and soon quite well." Tean, who by this time had changed position with his friend, and become out of his knowledge a philosopher, shook his head sadly and replied: "You no savey nothing, John; when black man know he die there is no hope. Suppose cat he catch mouse, all no use; mouse go change into a big, black cloud, all the same rain. Rain fall upon me, and each drop burn right into my bones. I die, John, glad I see you; black man all die, black woman no catch baby, tribe only fifty 'stead of five hundred. We all go out, all the same smoke, we vanish, go up somewhere, into the clouds. Black men and white men, he no can live. New Caledonia (as you call him) not big enough for both."

What happened after that Higginson never told, for when

*Higginson's Dream*

he reached that point he used to break out into a torrent of half-French, half-English oaths, blaspheme his gods, curse progress, rail at civilization, and recall the time when all the tribe were happy, and he and Tean in their youth went spearing fish. And then bewildered, and as if half-conscious that he himself had been to blame, would say: "I made the roads, opened the mines, built the first pier, I opened up the island; ah, le pauvre Tean, il me faisait de la peine . . . et sa sœur morte . . . she was so pretty with a hibiscus wreath . . . ah, well, pauvre petite . . . je l'aimais bien."





*From*  
SUCCESS  
*1902*



## *Success*

SUCCESS, which touches nothing that it does not vulgarize, should be its own reward. In fact, rewards of any kind are but vulgarities.

We applaud successful folk, and straight forget them, as we do ballet-dancers, actors, and orators. They strut their little hour, and then are relegated to peerages, to baronetcies, to books of landed gentry, and the like.

Quick triumphs make short public memories. Triumph itself only endures the time the triumphal car sways through the street. Your nine days' wonder is a sort of five-legged calf, or a two-headed nightingale, and of the nature of a calculating boy—a seven months' prodigy, born out of time to his own undoing and a mere wonderment for gaping dullards who dislocate their jaws in ecstasy of admiration and then start out to seek new idols to adore. We feel that after all the successful man is fortune's wanton, and that good luck and he have but been equal to two common men. Poverty, many can endure with dignity. Success, how few can carry off, even with decency and without baring their innermost infirmities before the public gaze!

Caricatures in bronze and marble, and titles made ridiculous by their exotic style we shower upon all those who have

## *Success*

succeeded, in war, in literature, or art; we give them money, and for a season no African Lucullus in Park Lane can dine without them. Then having given, feel that we have paid for service rendered, and generally withhold respect.

For those who fail, for those who have sunk still battling beneath the muddy waves of life, we keep our love, and that curiosity about their lives which makes their memories green when the cheap gold is dusted over, which once we gave success.

How few successful men are interesting! Hannibal, Alcibiades, with Raleigh, Mithridates, and Napoleon, who would compare them for a moment with their mere conquerors?

The unlucky Stuarts, from the first poet king slain at the ball play, to the poor mildewed Cardinal of York, with all their faults, they leave the stolid Georges millions of miles behind, sunk in their pudding and prosperity. The prosperous Elizabeth, after a life of honours unwillingly surrendering her cosmetics up to death in a state bed, and Mary laying her head upon the block at Fotheringay after the nine and forty years of failure of her life (failure except of love), how many million miles, unfathomable seas, and sierras upon sierras separate them?

And so of nations, causes, and events. Nations there are as interesting in decadence, as others in their ten-percentish apogee are dull and commonplace. Causes, lost almost from the beginning of the world, but hardly yet despaired of, as

the long struggle betwixt rich and poor, which dullards think eternal, but which will one day be resolved, either by the absorption of the rich into the legions of the poor, or vice versâ, still remain interesting, and will do so whilst the unequal combat yet endures.

Causes gone out of vogue, which have become almost as ludicrous as is a hat from Paris of ten years ago; causes which hang in monumental mockery quite out of fashion, as that of Poland, still are more interesting than is the struggle between the English and the Germans, which shall sell gin and gunpowder to negroes on the Coast.

Even events long passed, and which right-thinking men have years ago dismissed to gather dust in the waste spaces of their minds, may interest or repel according as they may make for failure or success.

Failure alone can interest speculative minds. Success is for the millions of the working world, who see the engine in eight hours arrive in Edinburgh from London, and marvel at the last improvement in its wheels. The real interest in the matters being the forgotten efforts of some alchemist who, with the majesty of law ever awake to burn him as a witch, with the hoarse laughter of the practical and business men still ringing in his ears, made his rude model of a steam engine, and perhaps lost his eyesight when it burst.

On a deserted beach in Cuba, not far from El Caney, some travellers not long ago came on a skeleton. Seated in a rough chair, it sat and gazed upon the sea. The gulls had roosted

on the collar bones, and round the feet sea-wrack and dulse had formed a sort of wreath. A tattered Spanish uniform still fluttered from the bones, and a cigar-box set beside the chair held papers showing that the man had been an officer of rank. One of these gave the password of the day when he had lost his life, and as the travellers gazed upon the bones, a land crab peeped out of a hole just underneath the chair.

All up and down the coast were strewn the remnants of the pomp and circumstance of glorious war. Rifles with rusty barrels, the stocks set thick with barnacles, steel scabbards with bent swords wasted to scrap iron, fragments of uniforms and belts, ends of brass chains and bones of horses reft from their wind-swept prairies to undergo the agonies of transport in a ship, packed close as sardines in a box, and then left to die wounded with the vultures picking out their eyes. All, all, was there, fairly spread out as in a kindergarten, to point the lesson to the fools who write of war, if they had wit to see. Gun carriages half silted up with sand, and rusted broken Maxims, gave an air of ruin, as is the case wherever Titan man has been at play, broken his toys, and then set out to kill his brother fools.

Withal nothing of dignity about the scene; a stage unskilfully set out with properties all got up on the cheap; even the ribs and trucks of the decaying ships of what once had been Admiral Cervera's fleet stood roasting in the sun, their port-holes just awash, as they once roasted in the flames



which burned them and their crews. Nothing but desolation in the scene, and yet a desolation of a paltry kind, not caused by time, by famine, pestilence, or anything which could impart an air of tragedy, only the desolation made by those who had respectively sent their poor helots out to fight, staying themselves smug and secure at home, well within reach of the quotations of the Stock Exchange.

So in his mouldering chair the general sat, his password antiquated and become as much the property of the first passer-by as an advertisement of "liver pills." His uniform, no doubt his pride, all rags; his sword (bought at some outfitter's) long stolen away and sold for drink by him who filched it; but yet the sun-dried bones, which once had been a man, were of themselves more interesting than were his living conquerors with their cheap air of insincere success.

The world goes out to greet the conqueror with flowers and with shouts, but first he has to conquer, and so draw down upon himself the acclamations of the crowd, who do not know that hundreds such as the man they stultify with noise have gloriously failed, and that the odium of success is hard enough to bear, without the added ignominy of popular applause. Who with a spark of humour in his soul can bear success without some irritation in his mind? But for good luck he might have been one of the shouters who run sweating by his car; doubts must assail him, if success has not already made him pachydermatous to praise, that sublimate which wears away the angles of our self-respect,

## *Success*

and leaves us smooth to catch the mud our fellows fling at us, in their fond adoration of accomplished facts. Success is but the recognition (chiefly by yourself) that you are better than your fellows are. A paltry feeling, nearly allied to the base scheme of punishments and of rewards which has made most faiths arid, and rendered actions noble in themselves mere huckstering affairs of fire insurance.

If a man put his life in peril for the Victoria Cross, or pass laborious days in laboratories tormenting dogs, only to be a baronet at last, a plague of courage and laborious days. Arts, sciences, and literature, with all the other trifles in which hard-working idle men make occupations for themselves, when they lead to material success, spoil their professor, and degrade themselves to piecework at so many pounds an hour.

Nothing can stand against success and yet keep fresh. Nations as well as individuals feel its vulgarizing power. Throughout all Europe, Spain alone still rears its head, the unspoiled race, content in philosophic guise to fail in all she does, and thus preserve the individual independence of her sons. Successful nations have to be content with their success, their citizens cannot be interesting. So many hundred feet of sanitary tubes a minute or an hour, so many wage-saving applications of machinery, so many men grown rich; fancy a poet rich through rhyming, or a philosopher choked in banknotes, whilst writing his last scheme of wise philosophy. Yet those who fail, no matter how ingloriously, have

their revenge on the successful few, by having kept themselves free from vulgarity, or by having died unknown.

A miner choked with firedamp in a pit, dead in the vain attempt to save some beer-mused comrade left behind entombed, cannot be vulgar, even if when alive he was a thief. Your crass successful man who has his statue set up in our streets (apparently to scare away the crows), and when he dies his column and a half in penny cyclopædias, turns interest to ashes by his apotheosis in the vulgar eye.

But the forgotten general sitting in his chair, his fleshless feet just lapping in the waves, his whitening bones fast mouldering into dust, nothing can vulgarize him; no fool will crown him with a tin-foiled laurel wreath, no poetaster sing his praise in maudlin ode or halting threnody, for he has passed into the realm of those who by misfortune claim the sympathy of writers who are dumb.

Let him sit on and rest, looking out on the sea, where his last vision saw the loss of his doomed country's fleet.

An archetype of those who fail, let him still sit watching the gulls fly screaming through the air, and mark the fish spring and fall back again with a loud crash, in the still waters of the tropic beach.

## *Might, Majesty, and Dominion*

A NATION dressed in black, a city wreathed in purple hangings, woe upon every face, and grief in every heart. A troop of horses in the streets ridden by kings; a fleet of ships from every nation upon earth; all the world's business stilled for three long days to mourn the passing of her who was the mother of her people, even of the poorest of her people in the land. The newspapers all diapered in black, the clouds dark-grey and sullen, and a hush upon the islands, and upon all their vast dependencies throughout the world. Not only for the passing of the Queen, the virtuous woman, the good mother, the slave of duty; but because she was the mother of her people, even the poorest of her people in the land. Sixty odd years of full prosperity; England advancing towards universal Empire; an advance in the material arts of progress such as the world has never known; and yet today she who was to most Englishmen the concentration of the national idea, borne on a gun-carriage through the same streets which she had so often passed through in the full joy of life. Full sixty years of progress; wages at least thrice higher than, when a girl, she mounted on her throne; England's dominions more than thrice extended; arts, sciences, and everything that

### *Might, Majesty, and Dominion*

tends to bridge space over, a thousand times advanced, and a new era brought about by steam and electricity, all in the lifetime of her who passed so silently through the once well-known streets. The national wealth swollen beyond even the dreams of those who saw the beginning of the reign; churches innumerable built by the pious care of those who thought the gospel should be brought home to the poor. Great battleships, torpedo boats, submarine vessels, guns, rifles, stinkpot shells, and all the contrivances of those who think that the material progress of the Anglo-Saxon race should enter into the polity of savage states, as Latin used to enter schoolboys' minds, with blood. Again, a hum of factories in the land, wheels whizzing, bands revolving so rapidly that the eye of man can hardly follow them, making machinery a tangled mass of steel, heaving and jumping in its action, so that the unpractical looker-on fears that some bolt may break and straight destroy him, like a cannon ball.

All this, and coal mines, with blast furnaces, and smelting works with men half-naked working by day and night before the fires. Infinite and incredible contrivances to save all labour; aerial ships projected; speech practicable between continents without the aid of wires; charities such as the world has never known before; a very cacoethes of good doing; a sort of half-baked goodwill to all men, so that the charities came from superfluous wealth and the goodwill is of platonic kind; all this and more during the brief dream of sixty years in which the ruler, she who was mother of her

### *Might, Majesty, and Dominion*

people, trod the earth. All these material instances of the great change in human life, which in her reign had happened, and which she suffered unresistingly, just as the meanest of her subjects suffered them, and as both she and they welcomed the sun from heaven as something quite outside of them, and, as it were, ordained, her people, in some dull faithful way, had grown into the habit of connecting in some vague manner with herself. For sixty years, before the most of us now living had uttered our first cry, she held the orb and sceptre, and appeared to us, a mother Atlas, to sustain the world. She left us, almost without a warning, and a nation mourned her, because she was the mother of her people, yes, even of the meanest of her people in the land.

So down the streets in the hard biting wind, right through the rows of dreary living-boxes which like a tunnel seemed to encase the assembled mass of men, her funeral procession passed. On housetops and on balconies her former subjects swarmed like bees; the trees held rookeries of men, and the keen wind swayed them about, but still they kept their place, chilled to the bone but uncomplainingly, knowing their former ruler had been the mother of them all.

Emperors and kings passed on, the martial pomp and majesty of glorious war clattering and clanking at their heels. The silent crowds stood reverently all dressed in black. At length, when the last soldier had ridden out of sight, the torrent of humanity broke into myriad waves, leaving upon the grass of the down-trodden park its scum of sandwich



### *Might, Majesty, and Dominion*

papers, which, like the foam of some great ocean, clung to the railings, round the roots of trees, was driven fitfully before the wind over the boot-stained grass, or trodden deep into the mud, or else swayed rhythmically to and fro as seaweed sways and moans in the slack water of a beach.

At length they all dispersed, and a well-bred and well-fed dog or two roamed to and fro, sniffing disdainfully at the remains of the rejected food which the fallen papers held.

Lastly, a man grown old in the long reign of the much-mourned ruler, whose funeral procession had just passed, stumbled about, slipping upon the muddy grass, and taking up a paper from the mud fed ravenously on that which the two dogs had looked at with disdain.

His hunger satisfied, he took up of the fragments that remained a pocketful, and then, whistling a snatch from a forgotten opera, slouched slowly onward and was swallowed by the gloom.

## *Sursum Corda*

**T**HERE is a plethora of talk, which seems to stop all thought, and by its ceaseless noise drive those who wish to think back on themselves. All talk, and no one listens, still less answers, for all must swell the general output of the chatter of the world. Bishops and Deans, with politicians, agitators, betting men, Women's Rights Advocates, members of Parliament, lawyers, nay even soldiers, sailors, the incredible average man, and most egregious superior person, must all be at it for their very lives. Still, talking serves a purpose, if only that of saving us from the dire tedium of our thoughts. Tobacco, sleep, narcotics, dice, cards, drink, horse racing, women, and religion, with palmistry, thought reading, the "occult," athletic sports, politics, all stand out ineffectual as consolers when compared to speech. What triumphs in the world can be compared to those speech gives?

The writer writes, toils, waits, publishes, and succeeds at last, but feels no flush of triumph like to that which the "cabotin," preacher, pleader, or mob orator enjoys when he perceives the eyes of the whole audience fixed upon him like a myriad of electric sparks; their ears drink in his words, and men and women, rich, poor, old, young, foolish,

and wise alike, are bound together by the spell of speech. So after all it may be that, though silence is of silver, speech is purest gold. Pity that, being golden, it should be abused; but still to what base uses gold is put, and so of speech.

But be that as it may, let speech be only silver, silence gold, take but away our speech, chain us within the terror of ourselves by silence long enforced, and the most abject drivell of the sound business man, whose every thought is abject platitude, whose mind has never passed from the strict limits of his villa and his counting-house, becomes as sweet as music to our ears. Let those who doubt try for a month to keep strict silence, never to speak, to hear and never dare to answer, to enchain their thoughts, their wishes, their desires, passions, anxieties, affections, regrets, remorse, anger, hatreds, loves—in brief, to leave the gamut of that inner life which makes a man, with all the notes untouched. Whilst listening to a painful preacher, sitting out a play, endeavouring to understand in Parliament what a dull speaker thinks he means to say, the thought creeps in, why teach the dumb to speak? Why rive away from them that which at first sight seems the chief blessing, want of speech, and so enable them to set their folly forth, and talk themselves down fools. Then comes experience, experience that stands as a divinity to reasoning men, and clamours out: Nay, let them speak although they know not what they say; their speech may strike a chord they know not of in some man's heart.

Think on a silent world, a world in which men walked

### *Sursum Corda*

about in all respects equipped with every organ, every sense, but without speech. They might converse by signs as Indians do upon the trail, but I maintain no city of tremendous night could be more awful than the horror of a speechless world. Never to speak, only to find our tongues in agony of fear, as horses tied within a burning stable, dumb idiots in great peril of their lives, or, as the animal under curare, upon the vivisector's bench (calling to man who should be as his God), give out occasionally some horrid sound, and even then know it would be unheard. Shepherds upon the hills, men in a cattle puesto in La Plata, hut keepers in Australia, the Gambusino straying amongst the valleys of the Sierra Madre, Arab rekass, monks, fishermen, lighthouse-keepers, and the poor educated man lost in the crowded solitude of London, all know of silence and its fears. Still they can talk if only to themselves, sing, whistle, speak to their animals, look at the sea, the desert, scan the immeasurable brown of pampas, the green of prairie, or the dull duskiess of bush, or if in London launch into objurgation on mankind, knowing that if they objurgate enough some one will answer, for we Britons cannot stand reproaches, knowing that we are just. An inward something seems to assure us of our righteousness, and all we do is never done as it is done in other and less favoured lands, from impulse, prejudice, or hurriedly, but well thought out, and therefore as inexorably unjust in the working as is fate itself. Let speech be golden, silver, diffusive, tedious, flippant, deceptive, corrupting, som-

### *Sursum Corda*

nolent, evasive, let it be what you will, it is the only medium by which we can assert that majesty which some folks tell us is inherent in mankind, but which the greater part of us (from democratic sentiment perchance) rarely allow to creep into the light of day; it is the only humanizing influence innate in men, and thus it seems unwise to put restraint upon it, except in Parliament. Chained dogs, parrots in cages, squirrels within their stationary bicycles, gold fish in globes, wild animals behind their bars, monkeys tied to an organ dressed in their little red woollen gowns (the fashion never changes), bears fastened to a Savoyard, camels on which climb multitudinous bands of children, elephants accompanied by a miserable "native" tramping about with tons of tourists on their backs, move me to wrath, and set me thinking what is it they can have done in an anterior state to undergo such treatment, and whether they were men who must as beasts thus expiate their crimes of *lèse-majesté* against the animals. Yet they are not condemned to silence, and perchance may fabulate at night or when their keepers sleep, or lie drunk, and in their ratiocination exhale their cares.

No, silence is reserved for men who have offended against the hazy principles of right and wrong, or over-stepped that ever-shifting frontier line, never too well defined, and which advancing toleration—that toleration which shall some day lighten life—may soon obliterate, or, if not quite obliterate, yet render the return across the line more feasible than now.

### *Sursum Corda*

When one considers it, how crass it is to shut men up in vast hotels, withdrawing them from any possible influence which might ever change their lives, and to confine them in a white-washed cell, with windows of Dutch glass, gas, and a Bible, table, chair, little square salt-box, wooden spoon, tin pan, schedule of rules, hell in their hearts, a pound of oakum in their hands, condemned to silence and to count the days, pricking them off under the ventilator with a bent nail or pin!

Well was it said, the only humanizing influence in a prison comes from the prisoners. Let the officials do their duty as they think they should, the governor be humane, the doctor know a little of his work, the chaplain not too inept, still prisoners of whatever rank or class, imprisoned for whatever crime, offence, or misdemeanour, look on each other as old friends after a day or two within the prison walls. Day follows day with "skilly," exercise, with chapel, with dreary dulness, and with counting hours. Night follows night, and when the light goes out the tramping up and down the cells begins, the rappings, and the mysterious code by which the prisoners communicate, sound through the building like an imprisoned woodpecker tapping to be free; tremendous nights of eight and forty hours, a twisting, turning, rising oft, and lying down to rise again, of watching, counting up to a million, walking about and touching every separate article; of thinking upon every base action of one's



life, of breaking out a-cursing like a drab; then falling to a fitful, unrefreshing sleep which seems to last but for a minute, and then the morning bell.

Happier by far the men who, in my youth in Spain, fished with a basket from the window for alms from passers-by, smoked, drank, and played cards, talked to their friends; whose wives and sisters brought them food in baskets, sat talking to them from outside, talked all day long, and passed the time of day with other citizens who walked the streets, read newspapers, and were known to other men as the "unhappy ones." A hell on earth you say, contaminating influences, murderers and petty thieves, with forgers, shop-lifters and debtors all together. At most a hell within a hell, and for the influence for good or ill, I take it that the communion of the sinners was at least as tolerable as we can hope to find (should we attain it) the communion of the saints. Philosophers can theorize to good effect as to the probability of other worlds, the atmosphere of Mars, the Delphic E, the Atomic Theory, the possible perfectibility of the pneumatic tire, on form, style, taste, or forms of government, on Socialism, Anarchy, the Trinity, on Cosmic Theism, Gnosticism, or the cessation of direct divine interposition in affairs sublunary, discuss their theories and the muzzling of their dogs, weave their philosophies (no man regarding them), invent their faiths, destroy them, and set to work again in the construction of new faiths just as ridicu-

lous as the faiths destroyed; but when they come to theorize upon the treatment of mankind, all their acumen straight evaporates.

But leaving theorists weaving the ropes to hang themselves spun from the cobwebs of their minds, and coming back to practice and to common sense—that common sense which makes so foolish most things that we do. A recent essayist fresh from his Malebolge has set forth all that men suffer shut within the silence of themselves, has written down the lesson that a man gains from the companionship of those who no doubt are in general not much more guilty than judges, jailers, their chaplains, warders, or than ourselves who sit forgetting that our neglect entailed on them the lack of opportunity.

Well has he spoken of the humility of prisoners, their cheerfulness, compassion for one another, well described the circling miserable ring of lame folk, aged men, those on the sick list, and the rest, who in the prison yard revolve in a small circle round a post, too feeble to keep pace with the robust rogues at exercise. I see them, too (can do so any time I close my eyes), in their long shoddy greatcoats, thin, pale, abject as dogs, purposeless, shiftless, self-abased, down-eyed, and shuffling in the prison shoes; expectorating, coughing, and a jest to those who trot around the ring stamping and cursing underneath their breath, what time the warders stand blowing their fingers, side arms belted on, stiff and immovable, and on the watch to pounce upon a

contravention of the rules. But whilst the quondam humourist now turned moralizer has left his faithful picture of the misery of those he lived amongst for two long years, he has omitted to set down the one event of prison life which breaks the dull monotony of weeks and days, and lets men feel for a brief space that they are men once more.

The dull week over, oakum all duly picked, cells well swept out, the skilly and brown bread discussed, beds all rolled up, the inspection over, faces all washed, with clean checked handkerchiefs (coarse as the topsail of a sugar droger) duly served out to last the week, the terrors of the bath encountered, the creepy silence of the vast un murmuring hive is broken by the Sabbath bell. Then cells give up their dead, and corridors are full of the pale skilly-fed shuffling crowd, each headed by its warder, and every man with something of anticipation in his eye, ready to march to church. To the vast chapel streams the voiceless crowd, and soon each seat is filled, a warder duly placed at each bench end to see the worshippers do not engage in speculations as to the nature of the Trinity, but stand and kneel and sit, do everything in fact that other congregations do, omitting only the due dumping of the threepenny bit into the plate, and not forgetting that when two or three are gathered thus to pray, their Creator stands amongst them, although they all are thieves. And thus assembled in their hundreds, to make their prayer before the God of Prisons, the congregation sits—prisoners and captives, shut within

themselves, and each man tortured by the thought that those outside have lost him from their minds. The chapel built in a semicircle, with the back seats gradually rising, so that all may be in view, the pulpit made of deal and varnished brown, the organ cased in deal, and for all ornament, over the altar the Creed, Lord's Prayer, and Ten Commandments, and those last look at the congregation as if ironically, and seem designed to fill the place of prison rules for all mankind. Furtively Bill greets Jack, and 'Enery, George: "'Ow are yer blokes? Another bloomin' week gone past." "I ain't a-talkin', Sir, 'twas t'other bloke," and a mysterious twitch makes itself felt from bench to bench till the whole chapel thus has said good-day. Loud peals the voluntary, the convicted organist—some thievish schoolmaster or poor bank clerk having made (according to himself) a slight mistake in counting out some notes—attacks an organ fugue, making wrong notes, drawing out all the stops alternately, keeping the vox humana permanently on, and plays and plays and plays till a grim warder stalks across the floor and bids him cease. "Dearly Beloved" seemed a little forced, our daily skilly scarce a matter worth much thanks, the trespasses of others we forgave thinking our own were all wiped out by our mere presence in the place, the Creed we treated as a subject well thrashed out, "Prisoners and Captives" made us all feel bad, the litany we roared out like a chant, calling upon the Lord to hear us in voices that I feel He must have heard; epistle, gospel, collects we endured, sitting as

*Sursum Corda*

patiently as toads in mud, all waiting for the hymn. The chaplain names it, and the organ roars, the organist rocks in his chair, on every brow the perspiration starts, all hands are clenched, and no one dares to look his neighbour in the eyes; then like an earthquake the pent-up sound breaks forth, the chapel quivers like a ship from stem to stern, dust flies, and loud from every throat the pious doggerel peals. And in the sounds the prison melts away, the doors are opened, and each man sits in his home surrounded by his friends, his Sunday dinner smokes, his children all clean washed are by his side, and so we sing, lift up our hearts and roar vociferously (praising some kind of God), shaken inside and out, yelling, perspiring, shouting each other down. Old lags and forgers, area sneaks, burglars, cheats, swindlers, confidence trick men, horse thieves, and dog stealers, men in for rape, for crimes of violence, assault and battery, with "smashers," swell mobsmen, blackmailers, all the vilest of the vile, no worse perhaps if all were known than are the most immaculate of all the good, made human once again during the sixteen verses of the hymn, and all the miseries of the past week wiped out in the brief exercise of unusual speech. The sixteen verses over, we sit down, and for a moment look at one another just in the same way as the worshippers are wont to do in St. Paul's, Knightsbridge, or St. Peter's, Eaton Square.

"Does you good, No. 8, the bloomin' 'ymn," an old lag says, but for the moment dazed by the ceasing of the noise,

*Sursum Corda*

as Bernal Diaz says he was when the long tumult ended and Mexico was won, I do not answer, but at length deal him a friendly kick and think the sixteen verses of the hymn were all too short.

So in a side street when the frequent loafer sidles up, and says mysteriously: "Gawd bless yer, chuck us 'arf a pint; I was in with you in that crooil plaice," I do so, not that I think he speaks the truth nor yet imagine that the prison, large though it was, contained two million prisoners, but to relieve his thirst and for the sake of those condemned to silence, there "inside," and for the recollection of the "bloomin' 'ymn."



## *Beattock for Moffat*

THE bustle on the Euston platform stopped for an instant to let the men who carried him to the third-class compartment pass along the train. Gaunt and emaciated, he looked just at death's door, and, as they propped him in the carriage between two pillows, he faintly said: "Jock, do ye think I'll live as far as Moffat? I should na' like to die in London in the smoke."

His cockney wife, drying her tears with a cheap hem-stitched pocket handkerchief, her scanty town-bred hair looking like wisps of tow beneath her hat, bought from some window in which each individual article was marked at seven-and-sixpence, could only sob. His brother, with the country sun and wind burn still upon his face, and his huge hands hanging like hams in front of him, made answer.

"Andra'," he said, "gin ye last as far as Beattock, we'll gie ye a braw hurl back to the farm, syne the bask air, ye ken, and the milk, and, and—but can ye last as far as Beattock, Andra'?"

The sick man, sitting with the cold sweat upon his face, his shrunken limbs looking like sticks inside his ill-made black slop suit, after considering the proposition on its merits,

*Beattock for Moffat*

looked up, and said: "I should na' like to bet I feel fair boss, God knows; but there, the mischief of it is, he will na' tell ye, so that, as ye may say, his knowldige has na commercial value. I ken I look as gash as Garscadden. Ye mind, Jock, in the braw auld times, when the auld laird just slipped awa', whiles they were birlin' at the claret. A braw death, Jock . . . do ye think it'll be rainin' about Ecclefechan? Aye . . . sure to be rainin' about Lockerbie. Nae Christians there, Jock, a' Johnstones and Jardines, ye mind?"

The wife, who had been occupied with an air cushion, and, having lost the bellows, had been blowing into it till her cheeks seemed almost bursting, and her false teeth were loosened in her head, left off her toil to ask her husband "If 'e could pick a bit of something, a porkpie, or a nice sausage roll, or something tasty," which she could fetch from the refreshment room. The invalid having declined to eat, and his brother having drawn from his pocket a dirty bag, in which were peppermints, gave him a "drop," telling him that he "minded he aye used to like them weel, when the meenister had fairly got into his prelection in the auld kirk, outby."

The train slid almost imperceptibly away, the passengers upon the platform looking after it with that half-foolish, half-astonished look with which men watch a disappearing train. Then a few sandwich papers rose with the dust almost to the level of the platform, sank again, the clock struck twelve, and the station fell into a half quiescence, like a

### *Beattock for Moffat*

volcano in the interval between the lava showers. Inside the third-class carriage all was quiet until the lights of Harrow shone upon the left, when the sick man, turning himself with difficulty, said: "Good-bye, Harrow-on-the-Hill. I aye liked Harrow for the hill's sake, tho' ye can scarcely ca' yon wee bit mound a hill, Jean."

His wife, who, even in her grief, still smarted under the Scotch variant of her name, which all her life she had pronounced as "Jayne," and who, true cockney as she was, bounded her world within the lines of Plaistow, Peckham Rye, the Welch 'Arp ('Endon way), and Willesden, moved uncomfortably at the depreciation of the chief mountain in her cosmos, but held her peace. Loving her husband in a sort of half-antagonistic fashion, born of the difference of type between the hard, unyielding, yet humorous and sentimental Lowland Scot, and the conglomerate of all races of the island which meet in London, and produce the weedy, shallow breed, almost incapable of reproduction, and yet high-strung and nervous, there had arisen between them that intangible veil of misconception which, though not excluding love, is yet impervious to respect. Each saw the other's failings, or, perhaps, thought the good qualities which each possessed were faults, for usually men judge each other by their good points, which, seen through prejudice of race, religion, and surroundings, appear to them defects.

The brother, who but a week ago had left his farm unwillingly, just when the "neeps were wantin' heughin'

### *Beattock for Moffat*

and a feck o' things requirin' to be done, forby a puckle sheep waitin' for keelin'," to come and see his brother for the last time, sat in that dour and seeming apathetic attitude which falls upon the country man, torn from his daily toil, and plunged into a town. Most things in London, during the brief intervals he had passed away from the sick-bed, seemed foolish to him, and of a nature such as a self-respecting Moffat man, in the hebdomadal enjoyment of the "prelections" of a Free Church minister could not authorize.

"Man, saw ye e'er a carter sittin' on his cart, and drivin' at a trot, instead o' walkin' in a proper manner alangside his horse?" had been his first remark.

The short-tailed sheep dogs, and the way they worked, the inferior quality of the cart horses, their shoes with hardly any calkins worth the name, all was repugnant to him.

On Sabbath, too, he had received a shock, for, after walking miles to sit under the "brither of the U.P. minister at Symington," he had found Erastian hymn books in the pews, and noticed with stern reprobation that the congregation stood to sing, and that, instead of sitting solidly whilst the "man wrestled in prayer," stooped forward in the fashion called the Nonconformist lounge.

His troubled spirit had received refreshment from the sermon, which, though short, and extending to but some five-and-forty minutes, had still been powerful, for he said:

"When yon wee, shilpit meenister—brither, ye ken, of rantin' Ferguson, out by Symington—shook the congrega-

### *Beattock for Moffat*

tion ower the pit mouth, ye could hae fancied that the very sowls in hell just girmed. Man, he garred the very stour to flee about the kirk, and, hadna' the big book been weel brass-banded, he would hae dang the haricles fair oot."

So the train slipped past Watford, swaying round the curves like a gigantic serpent, and jolting at the facing points as a horse "pecks" in his gallop at an obstruction in the ground.

The moon shone brightly into the compartment, extinguishing the flickering of the half-candle power electric light. Rugby, the station all lit up, and with its platforms occupied but by a few belated passengers, all muffled up like race horses taking their exercise, flashed past. They slipped through Cannock Chase, which stretches down with heath and firs, clear brawling streams, and birch trees, an outpost of the north lost in the midland clay. They crossed the oily Trent, flowing through alder copses, and with its backwaters all overgrown with lilies, like an aguapey in Paraguay or in Brazil.

The sick man, wrapped in cheap rugs, and sitting like Guy Fawkes, in the half-comic, half-pathetic way that sick folk sit, making them sport for fools, and, at the same time, moistening the eye of the judicious, who reflect that they themselves may one day sit as they do, bereft of all the dignity of strength, looked listlessly at nothing as the train sped on. His loving, tactless wife, whose cheap "sized" handkerchief had long since become a rag with mopping up her

### *Beattock for Moffat*

tears, endeavoured to bring round her husband's thoughts to paradise, which she conceived a sort of music hall, where angels sat with their wings folded, listening to sentimental songs.

Her brother-in-law, reared on the fiery faith of Moffat Calvinism, eyed her with great disfavour, as a terrier eyes a rat imprisoned in a cage.

"Jean wumman," he burst out, "to hear ye talk, I would jist think your meenister had been a perfectly illeeterate man, pairadise here, pairadise there, what do ye think a man like Andra' could dae daunderin' about a gairden naked, pu'in' soor aipples frae the trees?"

Cockney and Scotch conceit, impervious alike to outside criticism, and each so bolstered in its pride as to be quite incapable of seeing that anything existed outside the purlieus of their sight, would soon have made the carriage into a battle-field, had not the husband, with the authority of approaching death, put in his word.

"Whist, Jeanie wumman. Jock, dae ye no ken that the Odium-Theologicum is just a curse—pairadise—set ye baith up—pairadise. I dinna' even richtly ken if I can last as far as Beattock."

Stafford, its iron furnaces belching out flames, which burned red holes into the night, seemed to approach, rather than be approached, so smoothly ran the train. The mingled moonlight and the glare of iron-works lit the canal beside the railway, and from the water rose white vapours as from



*Beattock for Moffat*

Styx or Periphlegethon. Through Cheshire ran the train, its timbered houses showing ghastly in the frost which coated all the carriage windows, and rendered them opaque. Preston, the Catholic city, lay silent in the night, its river babbling through the public park, and then the hills of Lancashire loomed lofty in the night. Past Garstang, with its water-lily-covered ponds, Garstang where, in the days gone by, Catholic squires, against their will, were forced on Sundays to "take wine" in Church on pain of fine, the puffing serpent slid.

The talk inside the carriage had given place to sleep, that is, the brother-in-law and wife slept fitfully, but the sick man looked out, counting the miles to Moffat, and speculating on his strength. Big drops of sweat stood on his forehead, and his breath came double, whistling through his lungs.

They passed by Lancaster, skirting the sea on which the moon shone bright, setting the fishing boats in silver as they lay scarcely moving on the waves. Then, so to speak, the train set its face up against Shap Fell, and, puffing heavily, drew up into the hills, the scattered grey stone houses of the north, flanked by their gnarled and twisted ash trees, hanging upon the edge of the streams, as lonely, and as cut off from the world (except the passing train) as they had been in Central Africa. The moorland roads, winding amongst the heather, showed that the feet of generations had marked them out, and not the line, spade, and theodo-

### *Beattock for Moffat*

lite, with all the circumstance of modern road makers. They, too, looked white and unearthly in the moonlight, and now and then a sheep, aroused by the snorting of the train, moved from the heather into the middle of the road, and stood there motionless, its shadow filling the narrow track, and flickering on the heather at the edge.

The keen and penetrating air of the hills and night roused the two sleepers, and they began to talk, after the Scottish fashion, of the funeral, before the anticipated corpse.

“Ye ken, we’ve got a braw new hearse outby, sort of Epescopalian lookin’, we’ gless a’ roond, so’s ye can see the kist. Very conceity too, they mak’ the hearses noo-a-days. I min’ when they were jist auld sort o’ ruckly boxes, awfu’ licht, ye ken, upon the springs, and just went dodderin’ alang, the body swingin’ to and fro, as if it would flee richt oot. The roads, ye ken, were no nigh hand so richtly metalled in thae days.”

The subject of the conversation took it cheerfully, expressing pleasure at the advance of progress as typefied in the new hearse, hoping his brother had a decent “stan’ o’ black,” and looking at his death, after the fashion of his kind, as it were something outside himself, a fact indeed, on which, at the same time, he could express himself with confidence as being in some measure interested. His wife, not being Scotch, took quite another view, and seemed to think that the mere mention of the word was impious, or,

### *Beattock for Moffat*

at the least, of such a nature as to bring on immediate dissolution, holding the English theory that unpleasant things should not be mentioned, and that, by this means, they can be kept at bay. Half from affection, half from the inborn love of cant, inseparable from the true Anglo-Saxon, she endeavoured to persuade her husband that he looked better, and yet would mend, once in his native air.

"At Moffit, ye'd 'ave the benefit of the 'ill breezes, and that 'ere country milk, which never 'as no cream in it, but 'olesome, as you say. Why yuss, in about eight days at Moffit, you'll be as 'earty as you ever was. Yuss, you will, you take my word."

Like a true Londoner, she did not talk religion, being too thin in mind and body even to have grasped the dogma of the sects. Her Heaven a music 'all, her paradise to see the king drive through the streets, her literary pleasure to read lies in newspapers, or pore on novelettes, which showed her the pure elevated lives of duchesses, placing the knaves and prostitutes within the limits of her own class; which view of life she accepted as quite natural, and as a thing ordained to be by the bright stars who write.

Just at the Summit they stopped an instant to let a goods train pass, and, in a faint voice, the consumptive said: "I'd almost lay a wager now I'd last to Moffat, Jock. The Shap, ye ken, I aye looked at as the beginning of the run home. The hills, ye ken, are sort o' heartsome. No that they're bonny hills like Moffat hills, na', na', ill-shapen sort of things, just

### *Beattock for Moffat*

like Borunty tatties, awfu' puir names too, Shap Fell and Rowland Edge, Hutton Roof Crag, and Arnside Fell; heard ever ony body sich like names for hills? Naething to fill the mooth; man, the Scotch hills jist grap ye in the mooth for a' the world like speerits."

They stopped at Penrith, which the old castle walls make even meaner, in the cold morning light, than other stations look. Little Salkeld, and Armathwaite, Cotehill, and Scotby all rushed past, and the train, slackening, stopped with a jerk upon the platform, at Carlisle. The sleepy porters bawled out "change for Maryport," some drovers slouched into carriages, kicking their dogs before them, and, slamming to the doors, exchanged the time of day with others of their tribe, all carrying ash or hazel sticks, all red-faced and keen-eyed, their caps all crumpled, and their greatcoat-tails all creased, as if their wearers had lain down to sleep full dressed, so as to lose no time in getting to the labours of the day. The old red sandstone church, with something of a castle in its look, as well befits a shrine close to a frontier where in days gone by the priest had need to watch and pray, frowned on the passing train, and on the manufactories, whose banked-up fires sent poisonous fumes into the air, withering the trees which, in the public park, a careful council had hedged round about with wire.

The Eden ran from bank to bank, its water swirling past as wildly as when "The Bauld Buccleugh" and his Moss Troopers, bearing "the Kinmount" fettered in their midst,

*Beattock for Moffat*

plunged in and passed it, whilst the keen Lord Scroope stood on the brink amazed and motionless. Gretna, so close to England, and yet a thousand miles away in speech and feeling, found the sands now flying through the glass. All through the mosses which once were the "Debatable Land" on which the moss-troopers of the clan Graeme were used to hide the cattle stolen from the "auncient enemy," the now repatriated Scotchman murmured feebly "that it was bonny scenery" although a drearier prospect of "moss hags" and stunted birch trees is not to be found. At Ecclefechan he just raised his head, and faintly spoke of "yon auld carle, Carlyle, ye ken, a dour thrawn body, but a gran' pheelosopher," and then lapsed into silence, broken by frequent struggles to take breath.

His wife and brother sat still, and eyed him as a cow watches a locomotive engine pass, amazed and helpless, and he himself had but the strength to whisper: "Jock, I'm dune, I'll no' see Moffat, blast it, yon smoke, ye ken, yon London smoke has been ower muckle for ma lungs."

The tearful, helpless wife, not able even to pump up the harmful and unnecessary conventional lie, which after all, consoles only the liar, sat pale and limp, chewing the fingers of her Berlin gloves. Upon the weather-beaten cheek of Jock glistened a tear, which he brushed off as angrily as it had been a wasp.

"Aye, Andra'," he said, "I would hae liket awfu' weel that ye should win to Moffat. Man, the rowan trees are a'

### *Beattock for Moffat*

in bloom, and there's a bonny breer upon the corn—aye, ou aye, the reid bogs are lookin' gran' the year—but Andra', I'll tak' ye east to the auld kirk yaird, ye'll na' ken onything about it, but we'll hae a heartsome funeral."

Lockerbie seemed to fly towards them, and the dying Andra' smiled as his brother pointed out the place and said: "Ye mind, there are na' ony Christians in it" and answered: "Aye, I mind, naething but Jardines," as he fought for breath.

The death dews gathered on his forehead as the train shot by Nethercleugh, passed Wamphray, and Dinwoodie, and with a jerk pulled up at Beattock just at the summit of the pass.

So in the cold spring morning light, the fine rain beating on the platform, as the wife and brother got their almost speechless care out of the carriage, the brother whispered: "Dam't, ye've done it, Andra', here's Beattock; I'll tak' ye east to Moffat yet to dee."

But on the platform, huddled on the bench to which he had been brought, Andra' sat speechless and dying in the rain. The doors banged to, the guard stepping in lightly as the train flew past, and a belated porter shouted, "Beattock, Beattock for Moffat," and then, summoning his last strength, Andra' smiled, and whispered faintly in his brother's ear: "Aye, Beattock—for Moffat?" Then his head fell back, and a faint bloody foam oozed from his pallid lips. His wife stood crying helplessly, the rain beating upon the flowers of



*Beattock for Moffat*

her cheap hat, rendering it shapeless and ridiculous. But Jock, drawing out a bottle, took a short dram and saying, "Andra', man, ye made a richt gude fecht o' it," snorted an instant in a red pocket handkerchief, and calling up a boy, said: "Rin, Jamie, to the toon, and tell McNicol to send up and fetch a corp." Then, after helping to remove the body to the waiting room, walked out into the rain, and, whistling "Corn Rigs" quietly between his teeth lit up his pipe, and muttered as he smoked: "A richt gude fecht—man aye, ou aye, a game yin Andra', puir felly. Weel, weel, he'll hae a braw hurl onyway in the new Moffat hearse."

## *The Impenitent Thief*

**D**IMAS or Gestas, Gestas or Dimas, who can say which, when even monkish legends disagree?  
At any rate, one of the two died game.

Passion o' me, I hate your penitents.

Live out your life: drink, women, dice, murder, adultery, meanness, oppression, snobbery (by which sin the English fall); be lavish of others' money, and get thereby a name for generosity. Bow down to wealth alone, discerning talent, beauty, humour (the most pathetic of all qualities), wit, courage, and pathos, only in gilded fools.

Keep on whilst still digestion waits on appetite, and at the first advance of age, at the first tinge of gout, sciatica, at the first wrinkle, crow's-foot, when the hair grows thin upon the temples, the knees get "schaucle," when the fresh horse seems wild, the jolting of the express crossing the facing points makes you contract your muscles, and when all life seems to grow flat, stale, and unprofitable outside the library, forsake your former naughty life, and straight turn traitor on your friends, ideas, beliefs, and prejudices, and stand confessed apostate to yourself. For the mere bettering of your spiritual fortunes leaves you a turncoat still. It is mean, unreasonable, and shows a caitiff spirit, or im-

### *The Impenitent Thief*

paired intellect in the poor penitent who, to save his paltry soul, denies his life.

Dimas or Gestas, whiche'er it was, no doubt some unambitious oriental thief, a misappropriator of some poor bag of almonds, sack of grain, bundle of canes, some frail of fruit, camel's-hair picket rope, or other too well considered trifle, the theft of which the economic state of Eastern lands makes capital, had given him brevet rank amongst the world's most honoured criminals, set up on high to testify that human nature, even beside a coward and a God, is still supreme.

Perhaps again some sordid knave, whipped from the markets, an eye put out, finger lopped off, nose slit, ears cropped, and hoisted up to starve upon his cross as an example of the folly of the law, crassness of reason, to appease the terrors of the rich, or, perhaps, but to exemplify that Rome had a far-reaching arm, thick head, and owned a conscience like to that enjoyed by Rome's successor in the empire of the world.

Dimas or Gestas, perhaps some cattle thief from the Hauran, some tribesman sent for judgment to Jerusalem, black-bearded, olive in colour, his limbs cast like an Arab's, or a Kioway's twisted in agony, his whole frame racked with pain, his brain confused, but yet feeling, somehow, in some vague way, that he, too, suffered for humanity to the full as much as did his great companion, who to him, of course, was but a Jewish Thaumaturgist, as his adjuration, "If thou

### *The Impenitent Thief*

be the Son of God, save us and thyself," so plainly shows.

And still, perhaps, impenitent Gestas (or Dimas) was the most human of the three, a thief, and not ashamed of having exercised his trade. How much more dignified than some cold-hearted scoundrel who, as solicitor, banker, or confidential agent, swindles for years, and in the dock recants, and calls upon his God to pardon him, either because he is a cur at heart, or else because he knows the public always feels tenderly towards a cheat, having, perhaps, a fellow-feeling, and being therefore kind.

I like the story of the Indian who, finding his birch canoe caught in the current, and drifting hopelessly towards Niagara, ceased all his paddling when he found his efforts vain, lighted his pipe, and went it, on a lone hand, peacefully smoking, as the spectators watched him through their opera glasses.

And so perhaps this stony-hearted knave, whom foolish painters, bereft of all imagination, have delighted to revile in paint, making him villainous in face, humpbacked, blind of one eye, and all of them drawing the wretched man with devils waiting for his poor pain-racked soul, as if the cross was not a hell enough for any act of man, may have repented (of his poor unsuccessful villainies) long years ago. He may have found no opportunity, and being caught red-handed and condemned to death, made up his mind to cease his useless paddling, and die after the fashion he had lived. This may have been, and yet, perhaps again, this

### *The Impenitent Thief*

tribesman, as the night stole on the flowers, the waters, and the stones, all sleeping, reckoned up his life, saw nothing to repent of, and thought the cross but one injustice more. As gradually hope left his weakening body, he may have thought upon the folded sheep, the oxen in their stalls, the camels resting on their hardened knees, men sleeping wrapped up in their haiks beneath the trees, or at the foot of walls, mere mummies rolled in white rags, under the moonbeams and the keen rays of El Sohail. No one awake except himself and the two figures on his either hand, during the intolerable agony of the long hours, when jackals howl, hyenas grunt, and as, from Golgotha, Jerusalem looked like a city of the dead, all hushed except the rustling of the palm trees in the breeze. Then may his thoughts have wandered to his duar on the plains, and in his tent he may have seen his wives, and heard them moan, heard his horse straining on his picket rope and stamping, and wept, but silently, so that his fellow sufferers should not see his tears.

And so the night wore on, till the tenth hour, and what amazed him most was the continual plaint of Dimas (or of Gestas) and his appeals for mercy, so that at last, filled with contempt and sick with pain, he turned and cursed him in his rage.

Repentance, retrospection, and remorse, the furies which beset mankind, making them sure of nothing; conscious of actions, feeling they are eternal, and that no miracle can wipe them out. They know they forge and carry their own

### *The Impenitent Thief*

hell about with them, too weak to sin and fear not, and too irrational not to think a minute of repentance can blot out the actions of a life.

Remorse, and retrospection, and regret; what need to conjure up a devil or to invent a place of torment, when these three were ready to our souls. Born in the weakness (or the goodness) of ourselves, never to leave us all our lives; bone of our bone and fibre of our hearts; man's own invention; nature's revenge for all the outrages we heap upon her; reason's despair, and sweet religion's eagerest advocates; what greater evils have we in the whole pack with which we live, than these three devils, called repentance, retrospection, and regret?

But still the penitent upon the other side was human too. Most likely not less wicked in his futile villainy than his brother, whom history has gone out to vilify and to hold up as execrable, because he could not recognize a god in him he saw, even as he himself, in pain, in tears, and as it seemed, least fit to bear his suffering, of the three. Repentance is a sort of fire insurance, hedging on what you will—an endeavour to be all things to all men and to all gods.

Humanity repentant shows itself *en deshabelle*, with the smug mask of virtue clear stripped off, the visor of consistency drawn up, and the whole entity in its most favourite Janus attitude, looking both ways at once. The penitent on the right hand, whom painters have set forth, a fair young man, with curly golden hair, well rounded limbs, tears of



### *The Impenitent Thief*

contrition streaming from his eyes, with angels hovering around his head to carry off his soul, whom writers have held up for generations as a bright instance of redeeming faith duly rewarded at the last, was to the outward faithless eye much as his brother thief.

Perhaps he was some camel driver, who, entrusted with a bag of gold, took it and came into Jerusalem showing some self-inflicted wounds, and called upon Jehovah or Allah to witness that he had received them guarding the money against thieves. That which he said upon the cross he may have thought was true, and yet men not infrequently die, as they have lived, with lies upon their lips. He may have seen that in his fellow sufferer which compelled respect, or yet again he may have, in his agony, defied the Jews by testifying that the hated one was king. All things are possible to him who has no faith.

So, when the night grew misty towards dawn, and the white eastern mist crept up, shrouding the sufferers and blotting out their forms, the Roman soldiers keeping watch, had they looked up, could not have said which of the thieves was Gestas and which Dimas, had they not known the side on which their crosses stood.



*From* PROGRESS  
1905



## *San José*

THE house stood on a little hill, on one side looking out upon a plain, on which fed sheep, cattle, and mares, and flocks innumerable. Upon the other side, a wood of thorny trees, talas and ñandubays, seemed to wash up to it as waves wash on a rock. Nothing but cattle tracks led through the wood, and here and there a little muddy stream ran through it, fringed with pampas grass. Parrots and parroquets flew shrieking in the branches of the trees, and built their long and hanging nests from a dead bough. Humming-birds fluttered round the flowers, hovering like butterflies as they sucked out the honey from their hearts. Deeper in the recesses of the thickets, carpinchos had their lairs, and now and then a band of half-wild horses fed in the open glades. A hum of insects filled the air, and tortoises, like walking stones, trailed themselves on the sandy soil, and fell, as it appeared, rather than walked into the stream. The river ran, a yellow flood, between the banks of trees. Snags now and then protruded from its depth, and camelotes \* brought down by the floods were wreathed about them like gigantic eels. Herons and pink flamingoes

\* The camelote is a very thick-growing water-lily, which sometimes about chokes small streams. It no doubt has a scientific name which would cut it out of the writer's recollection if he looked it out and used it.

## *San José*

sat and fished contemplatively, and on the gaunt dead branches of the willows vultures sat and nodded in the sun. An air of mystery and of danger brooded on the place, especially upon the "pass," to which tracks of unshod horses led, making one wonder who the riders were who passed so frequently.

On either side the "pass" the water deepened suddenly, and at the landing on the farther side the trail led through high banks on which tall feathery tacuaras grew. The sort of place it was that made a man take his reins short on coming from the shelter of the trees on to the open sandy flat before the crossing, and feel for his revolver, whilst looking carefully to see if birds sat still and did not seem alarmed.

Upon the farther side, and gleaming whitely here and there through the dark trees, ran sandhills, giving an air as of the desert where the luxuriant vegetation ended and the sand began.

White and flat-topped, battlemented, and with two towers to flank it stood the house, built round a courtyard in which was set a well. Its massive gates, on either side of which was caged a jaguar, shut it off from the world. On the tiled floors of courtyard and of galleries the heavy spurs the gauchos wore just dangling off their heels clanked with the noise of fetters as men walked or lounged about the store where the proprietor, master of the lives and destiny of a whole province, did not think any shame to sell his goods.



## *San José*

In South America, as in the East (and Scotland), trade does not vilify but on the contrary raises its votary, and people do not make distinctions between the man who sells a thousand pounds of coal and the small dealer who sells tea, gin, sardines, and the other products with which commerce blesses all the world. Outside the gates some straw-thatched houses held the general's guard and all their families. Their horses grazed upon the plain, and they, except when now and then they had to cut a throat by the command of the Supreme, were quietly pugnacious; that is to say, they fought amongst themselves, first blood for a quart of wine, to show their valour, or occasionally about their women, but they left the peaceful population to themselves, with the exception of now and then stealing a horse or two or carrying off a girl.

Their general ruled them with a rod of iron, tempered with personal suavity, treating them half as children, half as savages, and they responded after the fashion of their kind, taking all leniency for weakness, and thinking power was given to a man by some wise providence which was beyond their ken.

The inside of the house was bare, with here and there some pieces of old Spanish furniture, great massive chairs and straight-backed sofas, seated with leather and studded with brass nails. A picture of the owner of the house, drawn by some tenth-rate painter, stared down from the wall. In it the subject sat upon his horse, which appeared stuffed

## *San José*

with sawdust, dressed in a gorgeous uniform, and pointing with a Napoleonic air over a country in which grew flowers unknown in South America, springing up at the charger's feet and seeming in some places to start out from his legs, after the fashion of the blossoms of a Judas tree.

Wooden and oily as was the painting in its gaudy frame, it yet convinced one at first sight that it must be a likeness of the sitter; crude and horrible, but haunting like a picture in a dream. On a thin silver plate upon the frame the legend ran: "General Don Justo José de Urquiza, Napoleón del Sur."

Spanish-America has been so fertile in Napoleons (of the West and South), that no one was astonished at the title, but looked upon it as an aspiration towards perfection in the military art.

Set here and there on brackets and on French tables, which with chairs gilt and rickety, and looking as if they had been bought at the selling up of a ruined courtesan of the Rue Notre Dame de Lorette, stood statuettes of General Bonaparte upon a camel at the Pyramids, of the First Consul, and of Napoleon at Austerlitz—in fact, of a whole gamut of the life of him who seems to be an ignis-fatuus to every general of the south. The gem of the whole palace (as it was called by the devout) was the great ballroom cased in looking-glass. The walls were panelled in enormous frames of looking-glass; the ceiling, broken up into squares in semi-Moorish style, was thickly coated here and there

with gold. The chandelier, in which gilt strove with crystal for the mastery in vulgarity, was large enough for a cathedral, and the table-tops were glass. This marvel of artistic beauty, reminding one of those famed mansions built decidedly of hands in the Redyk at Antwerp, the general had built to please his daughter Manolita or Rosita, for I forget her name.

Such was the palace. Outside a Moorish-Spanish-looking house; inside a mixture of the house of a conquistador and a French brothel, and serving in itself as an apt illustration of the culture of the country under the general's rule.

All Entre Rios knew the place.

Throughout that grassy, undulating Mesopotamia, shading off into forests of hard-wooded, prickly trees where it confines with Corrientes, it was a word of fear.

Did not Don Justo de Urquiza live there, the gaucho general who at Pabon defeated Rosas, putting down Centralism, and at the same time raising up himself, after the fashion of all liberators since first their trade began? From his front door, or, to be accurate, from the palenque where the horses all were tied, down to the town of Concepcion del Uruguay, for twenty miles ran a continuous avenue of cabbage-like ombús. Ostriches fed amongst the sheep, and stalked as tame as barn-door fowls close to his house, and, more surprising, fed in safety from the Ibicuy up to the Yucuri, no man disturbing them, although their feathers fetched at least three dollars for the pound. Deer were as

common as were calves throughout the land. They scarcely raised their heads as Christians sailed across the plains upon their horses, or if they did, rose lazily, stamped once or twice, and snorting struck into a shambling trot which tempted the unwary gringo \* to pursue them, an undertaking as unprofitable as that of chasing a coyote in the sage-bush prairies of the north.

Carpinchos in the rivers were as tame as ducks. They lay and sunned themselves like swine, and waddling awkwardly plunged into the stream, wallowing like hippopotami with their broad backs awash. Biscachas on their mounds were as self-confident as the traditional British citizen in the seclusion of his house, or more so; for they feared no tax-collector, under the rule of peace to all the brute creation which Don Justo had decreed. Nothing was shy but the wild horses in the woods and deltas of the rivers, where they passed their lives as free as albatrosses.

Nothing was chased, shot, caught with bolas, snared, or annoyed, by order of the general; and all the gauchos knew his punishments. The first offence, a fine; the next, to be staked out between four posts with fresh hide ropes which the hot sun contracted; the third, deprived of horses, and obliged to march amongst the infantry; the fourth and last, death by the knife, for cartridges were dear, and knives and cutting throats a subject for a jest amongst a population to whom the sight of blood was constant from its youth.

\* "Gringo" equals foreigner. It was applied even to Englishmen.

## *San José*

For leagues on every side of San José horses and cattle had no other brand than that known as "La Marca Flor," \* the astronomic sign with which Don Justo marked his beasts. His flocks and herds stretched over plains and wandered through the woods, no man, however willing, ever daring to kill one; for spies were everywhere, and cover up the trail no matter how he would, walking his horse for miles through streams, choosing the stoniest ground, or crossing and recrossing his own tracks till they became like rails at Clapham Junction, still there was some one cunning as himself to trace him to his rancho and say, as did the prophet in the Scriptures, "Thou art the thief."

The wielder of such arbitrary power was of a mean appearance, as have been other great ones of the earth. Short, stout, and grey he was, with bushy whiskers, his diaphragm imprisoned, as a general rule, in uniform, and bulging on his belt. He took the air in an old Spanish carriage hung on leather springs, which, swinging high and pitching like a fishing-boat on the rough team of six half-broken horses, driven with long hide reins and guided by a boy who had a lasso fastened to his girth and hitched on to the hook upon the pole, jolted across the plains. Behind this equipage followed a guard composed of gauchos wilder than the horses that they rode, long-haired, and with their naked feet stuffed into boots made from the skin stripped from the

\* It was in this wise: T. After the general's death the writer has ridden many horses of the brand, though during his life it would have been a dangerous experiment to try.

hind-leg of a horse. Their toes protruding grasped the stirrups like a vice, and from their heels dangled and jingled huge and rusty spurs, which clattered on the ground like fetters when they walked. Their arms were carbines, which for convenience they never cleaned, but bore them rusty, as befits a man not born to be the slave of anything. They loaded them up to the muzzle with anything that came to hand, and seldom fired them but on holy days, and then with much precaution and no little danger to themselves, and after shutting carefully both eyes. Their sabres usually they turned to daggers, or, if they did not, stuffed them in below the girth; for their chief weapons of offence were bolas, which they slung to a hair's-breadth, after the fashion of the Benjamites, and never missed their aim.

Most of their horses were half wild, and more than half, unbitted; but that did not disturb their riders, who rode them with their long hide reins buttoned into a thong tied round their jaw, and with a halter always in their hands, in case they suddenly stepped in a *tuco-tuco*\* hole, or crossed their legs and fell.

As the old coach rattled along the rutty track, crossing the muddy streams and bounding over holes, the escort galloped after it, as a shoal of porpoises accompanies a ship, crossing and wheeling round from side to side, throwing their hats upon the ground, and leaning down to pick

\*The "*tuco-tuco*" is a burrowing animal, and has, no doubt, his scientific name and address.



them up again, all at full speed, and as if each one of them had half-a-dozen necks. They rolled their cigarettes and struck a light from flint and steel, all at a gallop, and on horses which, if you touched them accidentally, were almost sure to buck. The riders' hair and ponchos fluttered in the wind, and now and then they swung their whips, which hung from straps upon their wrists, in circles in the air. Occasionally they yelled, out of the joy of life, and galloping cursed their horses and their mothers if they stumbled on the ruts, treating them to the choicest epithets they knew, "as if they had been Christians," and winding up their litany of oaths upon a certain woman of ill-fame, who, after having borne a bastard to the Fiend, incontinently burst.

As the wild cavalcade swept past the solitary houses surrounded by their peach groves, and each with their ombú growing beside the well, such of the inhabitants as were about would gaze towards it and gravely murmuring, "There passes the Supreme," retire indoors, and pray that the Supreme would pass them by without a visit, which by experience they all knew meant expense.

He, wrapped in dignity, with all the windows of the coach drawn up to keep out dust, sat smoking stolidly, holding a cigarette between his fingers coloured bright orange at the tips with juice. If a mishap occurred, as it did now and then, in crossing rivers or the like, the general would emerge, and sitting in the shade of his own carriage,

give orders to his myrmidons to light a fire. This they accomplished by collecting bones, dry grass, and thistle stalks; and then producing from the recesses of the coach a kettle, the general would send for water, heat it, and solemnly drink maté till the repairs were done. Before him, with the kettle in his hand, would stand a soldier, usually a black, who poured the water, settled the yerba in the ground, and saw that all was right by sucking up a little of the brew through the bombilla before he passed the beverage to his chief. He, seated on a bullock's skull or on a stone, talked and chaffed pleasantly, after the fashion of an Eastern potentate, with all his subjects, between whom and himself there was slight difference but the power of death, which power he wielded easily, and almost with an air of jocularity, which well became the place.

Sometimes, instead of driving in his coach, the general would set out with his rustic cavalry upon an ostrich hunt. High and disposedly he sat his horse, a black for choice, and hung with silver trappings, with its tail squared off above the fetlocks and its mane hogged half-way down, and cut in castles after the fashion of a box hedge in an Elizabethan garden, but leaving a long lock. His toes just touching his heavy stirrups with a crown beneath the feet, his legs encased in patent leather boots worked into patterns in the front with gaudy-coloured silk, his silver-mounted whip dangling from his right wrist, and in the hollow of the left hand his heavy silver reins, he looked the gaucho

leader that he was, although he never had attained the arts of horsemanship of his great rival Rosas, who, it is said, could jump on a wild horse without a saddle or a bit and conquer him. But as he was, he looked the part, and every portion of the complicated gear the gaucho wears was in its place. His silver headstall with the throat-latch loose upon the throat, the bit with silver eagle swinging on a hinge beneath the lower jaw, the massive silver cups on either side the mouth, all glittered in the sun. His flat hide rope with which to stake his horse at night was plaited in an ingenious pattern round the neck, and on it hung his hobbles, made of raw hide and furnished with two buttons (for buckles were unknown upon those plains) and a thick silver ring.

His saddle, with its various saddle-cloths and its two pieces—one of hide and one of leather—placed between them and the tree, was broad and heavy, and at each end was mounted with thick plate. The girth, six inches broad, of whitest hide, had his own name and brand (“La Marca Flor”) stitched into it with a hide-strip cut fine as packing-thread. Above the tree he had a goat’s-hair cloth from Tucuman coloured dark blue, and upon that a piece of leather of the river-hog, edged with charol\* and kept in place by a white surcingle of half-tanned hide. His spurs, whose rowels you could scarcely span, dangled below his

\* “Charol” is patent leather, but it would not sound right to the writer to use the English word in describing a gaucho saddle. “Darse charol” is used in South America to express “putting on side.”

heels, and silver chains, which met above his instep in a lion's head, maintained them in their place. The culminating glory of the man and horse was in the breastplate, which was of silver scales, and in the middle of it shone an ounce of gold struck in Bolivia. His knife and sheath were silver beautifully worked, and on his saddle, just behind his thigh, on the off side, his lasso, plaited and carefully coiled, hung ready to his hand. His ostrich bolas, which he carried round his waist, were covered with a lizard's skin, and over his left arm he carried a fine poncho of vicuña wool, which fluttered as he rode.

Arrived at where the hunt was to begin (although it might have started at his house), the riders all spread out to form a fan, and cantering slowly forward, soon found in front of them a band of ostriches.

The general gave the word, and in an instant, without the shogging of the legs and wagging of the elbows which one associates with putting a horse into a gallop suddenly in hunting-fields at home, the horsemen all had sprung into full speed. With shouts, and with their greyhounds bounding in front of them, the outmost edges of the fan, which at the start had been a good half-mile apart, contracted, enclosing in a wedge the frightened birds. The bolas whistled through the air, the ranks were broken, and each man attached himself to a particular group of ostriches. Skimming across the high brown grass, their wings extended wide to catch the wind, they fled. If they could get

out clear and turn down wind, they generally escaped, for horses could not catch them but against the wind.

But the pursuers strained every nerve to cut them off, and now and then one fell, his legs entangled in the balls. If the man who had thrown had time, in passing he dismounted, and with a slash cut off the head; if not, he left the ostrich struggling on the ground, certain of being able to come back upon his trail and pick it up again. If by some accident he missed his mark, as he scoured past he stooped and picked the bolas from the ground, or, if he did not see them, threw down his hat or handkerchief to mark the place; then quickly he unfastened a spare pair from round his waist, or took them from beneath the sheepskin which he wore upon his saddle, and galloped onward, shouting, his hat blown back and kept in place below his chin by a silk cord, forming an aureole about his head. The general, after a perfunctory cast or two, usually sat upon his horse like an equestrian statue and surveyed the chase. On every side groups of wild horsemen and of frightened birds were disappearing on the low horizon of the plain. Nearer, some had dismounted, and after killing, skinned the ostriches, throwing their pelts like huge white fleeces on the ground. The greyhounds gorged themselves with flesh, and slowly men appeared upon the waves of the prairie, their horses bathed in sweat, some lame, but all with several ostrich skins upon their saddles, from which the blood dripped slowly on to the horses' flanks.

### *San José*

They gathered round the general, who sat smoking on his horse, unloosed their girths for a few minutes, and then striking into a canter which looked like clockwork, galloped the league or two of "camp" to San José.

There they received some bottles of Brazilian rum, and after having roasted several sheep or an ox in the hide, feasted like cannibals, all sitting round the fire. When night fell, women appeared mysteriously, as their first mother did in Eden, and, some one playing a guitar, the strings of which were mended up with strips of hide, they danced the "Gato," the "Cielito," and the "Pericón," whilst others sang wailing jarabes in the high falsetto voice which their progenitors had brought from Spain after inheriting it from Africa. Their dances were all slow, and danced almost without lifting their feet above the ground, and had much waving of their handkerchiefs, except a valse, which they danced nearly all the time unmoved, and with a rapt expression on their faces as if they were accomplishing an act of faith or a religious rite. The ball took place in a long shed called locally "galpón," and was illuminated by bowls of mutton fat in which wicks floated, giving out a little light and a strong smell of grease.

The women sat all in a row waiting, as Scripture says, for any man to hire them. The men came in and out from beside the fire when they were tired of eating, danced solemnly, and then, treating their partners to a drink of gin, which they both drank out of the bottle's mouth, either



resumed their places by the fire and fell to drinking maté or to discussing horses' brands, or stood in groups about the shed, addressing compliments to the dancers upon their prowess and their charms. Outside, the stillness of the plain was broken but by the bleating of the folded sheep or the shrill neigh of stallions fighting for their mares:

In the thick belt of trees which fringed the river for a league on either side, the fire-flies flitted, looking like sparks thrown off by the interior fire of nature, against the dark, metallic-looking leaves.

As night wore on, the blazing bones and wood gradually smouldered down into a glowing cake, throwing a bluish light upon the sleeping figures by the fire. Slowly all noises ceased, except the munching of the horses tied to their stake-ropes, then they too stood still hanging their heads and resting their hind-legs alternately. The southern stars shone out, milder and with a greater luminosity than the sharp diamonds of the north, and in the moonlight the white, flat-topped house with towers and battlements stood out so sharply that it seemed made of cardboard and had an air of Eastern mystery. Towards dawn a thick white mist crept upwards from the river, and the dew falling lay like frost upon the sleepers, making them turn uneasily and draw instinctively their ponchos and their rugs over their heads, while horses shivered at their stake-ropes, and hunching up their backs, stood sulkily, with their heads bending to the ground like chickens in the snow.

## *San José*

So did life pass in San José, the general at home living more or less like an Eastern pasha, only with fewer wives, but just as great a power over the lives and property of those around, and on the rare occasions when he was called by business or by politics to Buenos Ayres being regarded as a sort of legendary hero whom boys were taught to reverence at school for his past services, or as a sort of pterodactyl come to trouble smaller animals. But as it often happens that a tyrant in the worst moments of his tyranny is safe through fear, so does it often come about that, when he has repented him of bloodshed and lives a quiet life endeavouring to do as much good as he can, politicians, under the guise of patriotism, assassinate him to advance themselves, under the pretext of the welfare of mankind.

So it fell out in San José and with Don Justo, then grown old and fat, kindly but still tyrannical in a paternal way, as befits one who in his youth has been a man of blood.

The gauchos liked him, for he had been their leader, and his rule had not been bloody in comparison with many of the liberators and the patriots who abounded in the land. He might have gone down to his grave in peace, and been remembered as a kindly man according to his lights, had he not had a son.

In this respect he and the prophet Eli were alike. Not that the people of the province cared much about Cesario's doings with the ladies, but they objected, the virus of com-

mercialism having befouled their blood, to his political economy. That is to say, he made himself unpopular by his exactions, and the opposition politicians used his sins to stir up animosity against the general, who probably, after the fashion of most rulers, thought himself beloved when, but at most, his subjects tolerated him.

One López Jordan, a man who had seen service on the frontier, drew to himself some followers, and went about plundering and killing cattle, waving the national flag, and talking loudly of the rights of man. This of course means he thought his rights were not sufficient for his wants, and poor mankind as usual was the stalking-horse.

Most probably Urquiza, had he thought the matter serious enough, would have sent out and caught the leader of the bands and had his throat cut, or, sewing him up in a green hide, have left him in the sun to perish miserably. But he, secure in his long years of quiet rule, let the thing go till Jordan had become a formidable foe. Then he prepared to gather men to take the field, but would not listen to the warnings which he received from time to time that he himself was in great danger of assassination, and that his guards were bribed. It is not probable the general had ever heard of Nemesis, except as one of the gods the heathen worshipped before we were baptized. But, be that as it may, the general was chiefly occupied in breeding fine-woolled sheep, crossing his cows with short-horn bulls, and in endeavouring to breed that opus majus of the gaucho breeder

—a well-marked “Tuviano” horse, who should have all the colours—black, brown, and white—in equal blotches fairly disposed upon his back, and in listening to his wife.

Seated one evening in his plate-glass ballroom, quite unattended but by a negro boy or two, and taking maté with his daughter, he heard a sound of spurs upon the courtyard tiles. A dog or two barked noisily, and the door handle of the monstrous ballroom turned. He called, received no answer, went to the door himself, opened it, and looking out, beheld the passage full of men. He spoke to them, asking the reason of their presence, and then one Luna, a tall, one-eyed negro, stepping forward said, as he drew his knife, “Death to all tyrants,” and the rest crowded in. The general, who was quite unmoved, retreated slowly, and the murderers, hacking and cutting at him with their knives, pursued him round the room. Luna’s first blow wounded him in the arm, and as he dodged about the meretricious glass-topped tables the blood dripped on the marble floor as, with a sword a negro boy had brought, he fought his way to where a sofa and some chairs formed a momentary defence.

Just as he reached it, his daughter, who had found a pistol, opened fire. Her first shot broke a looking-glass, and the next wounded a gaucho who was striking at her father with an axe. The latter turned without a word, thinking he was attacked behind, and as he turned Luna stooped forward and ran him through the back. He fell without a groan,

and as his daughter fired again, killing a man and wounding Luna in the hand, the murderers rushing forward finished him as he lay motionless upon the gaudy sofa, his lifeblood ebbing and his dull eyes turned to his daughter, who still stood at the door, her pistol in her hand.

So died Don Justo de Urquiza, last of the gaúcho leaders; and one night, seated by a fire and smoking quietly beneath the southern stars, one of the murderers told me the story, and added that the sight of the dead man and the wild group of gauchos in the glass-fitted ballroom in the flaring light often came back to him, though he owed many lives, and by God's favour could, when obliged, dispatch a Christian as easily as he could kill a sheep.

But, he remarked, though as a general rule it was not good to spare, for those you spared usually lived to make you rue your clemency, he still was glad that no one harmed the girl, "for by the life of Satan," as he thought, "her children would be men."

## *Faith*

“**I** TOLD you,” said Hamed-el-Angeri, “of how once on a time all beasts could speak, and of how Allah, in his might, and for his glory, and no doubt for some wise cause, rendered them dumb, or at least caused them to lose their Arabic. Now will I tell you of a legend of the Praised One who sleepeth in Medina, and whom alone Allah has pardoned of all men.”

He paused, and the hot sun streamed through the branches of the carob tree, under whose shade we sat upon a rug, during the hottest hours, and threw his shadow on the sandy soil, drawing him, long of limb, and lithe of pose, like John the Baptist revealed by Donatello in red clay.

Our horses hung their heads, and from the plain a mist of heat arose, dancing and shivering in the air, as the flame dances waveringly from a broken gas-pipe lighted by workmen in a street. Grasshoppers twittered, raising their pandean pipe of praise to Allah for his heat, and now and then a locust whirled across the sky, falling again into the hard dry grass, just as a flying-fish falls out of sight into the sea. “They say,” Hamed again began, “that in Medina, or in Mecca, in the blessed days when God spake to his Prophet, and he composed his book, making his laws, and laying



down his rules of conduct for men's lives, that many wondered that no nook or corner in all Paradise was set apart for those who bore us, or whose milk we sucked, when they had passed their prime."

Besides the Perfect Four, women there were who, with the light that Allah gave them, strove to be faithful, just, and loving, and to do their duty as it seemed to them, throughout their lives.

One there was, Rahma, a widow, who had borne four stalwart sons, all slain in battle, and who, since their deaths, had kept herself in honour and repute, labouring all day with distaff and with loom.

Seated in a lost duar in the hills, she marvelled much that the wise son of Ámina, he to whom the word of God had been vouchsafed, and who himself had owed his fortune to a woman, could be unjust. Long did she ponder in her hut beyond Medina, and at last resolved to take her ass, and set forth, even to Mecca, and there speak with God's messenger, and hear from him the why and wherefore of the case. She set her house in order, leaving directions to the boy who watched her goats to tend them diligently, and upon the lucky day of all the week, that Friday upon which the faithful all assemble to give praise, she took her way.

The people of the village thought her mad, as men in every age have always thought all those demented who have determined upon any course which has not entered into

## *Faith*

their own dull brains. Wrinkled and withered like a mummy, draped in her shroud-like haik, she sat upon her ass. A bag of dates, with one of barley, and a small water-skin her luggage, and in her heart that foolish, generous, undoubting Arab faith, powerful enough to move the most stupendous mountain chain of facts which weigh down European souls, she journeyed on.

Rising before the dawn, in the cold chill of desert nights, she fed her beast from her small store of corn, shivering and waiting for the sun to warm the world. Then, as the first faint flush of pink made palm trees look like ghosts and half revealed the mountain tops floating above a sea of mist, she turned towards the town, wherein he dwelt who denied Paradise to all but girls, and prayed. Then, drawing out her bag of dates, she ate, with the content of those to whom both appetite and food are not perennial gifts.

As the day broke, and the fierce sun rose, as it seemed with his full power, the enemy of those who travel in those wilds, she clambered stiffly to her seat on her straw pillion, and with a suddra thorn urged on her ass to a fast stumbling walk, his feet seeming but scarce to leave the ground as he bent forward his meek head as if he bore the sins of all mankind upon his back.

The dew lay thickly on the scant mimosa scrub and camel-thorn, bringing out aromatic odours, and filling the interstices of spiders' webs as snow fills up the skeletons of leaves. The colocynths growing between the stones

seemed frosted with the moisture of the dawn, and for a brief half-hour nature was cool, and the sun shone in vain. Then, as by magic, all the dew disappeared, and the fierce sunlight heated the stones, and turned the sand to fire.

Green lizards, with kaleidoscopic tints, squattered across the track, and hairy spiders waddled in and out the stones. Scorpions and centipedes revived, and prowled about like sharks or tigers looking for their prey, whilst beetles, rolling balls of camels' dung, strove to as little purpose as do men, who, struggling in the dung of business, pass their lives, like beetles, with their eyes fixed upon the ground.

As the sun gradually gained strength, the pilgrim drew her tattered haik about her face, and sat, a bundle of white rags, head crouched on her breast and motionless, except the hand holding the reins, which half mechanically moved up and down, as she urged on the ass into a shuffling trot.

The hot hours caught her under a solitary palm tree, by a half-stagnant stream, in which great tortoises put up their heads, and then sank out of sight as noiselessly as they had risen, leaving a trail of bubbles on the slimy pool. Some red flamingoes lazily took flight, and then with outstretched wings descended further off, and stood expectant, patient as fishers, and wrapt in contemplation during the mysteries of their gentle craft.

Then the full silence of the desert noontide fell upon the scene, as the old woman, after having tied her ass's feet with a thin goat's-hair cord, sat down to rest. Long did

she listen to her ass munching his scanty feed of corn, and then the cricket's chirp and the faint rustling of the lone palm-trees' leaves lulled her to sleep.

Slumbering, she dreamed of her past life—for dreams are but the shadow of the past, reflected on the mirror of the brain—and saw herself, a girl, watching her goats, happy to lie beneath a bush all day, eating her bread dipped in the brook at noon, and playing on a reed; then, evening come, driving her charges home, to sleep on the hard ground upon a sheepskin, in the corner of the tent. She saw herself a maiden, not wondering overmuch at the new view of life which age had brought, accepting in the same way as did her goats, that she too must come under the law of nature, and in pain bear sons. Next, marriage, with its brief feasting, and eternal round of grinding corn, broken alone by childbirth once a year, during the period of her youth. Then came the one brief day of joy since she kept goats a child upon the hills, the morning when she bore a son, one who would be a man, and ride, and fill his father's place upon the earth.

She saw her sons grow up, her husband die, and then her children follow him, herself once more alone, and keeping goats upon the hill, only brown, bent and wrinkled, instead of round, upright and rosy, as when she was a child. Still, with the resignation of her race, a resignation as of rocks to rain, she did not murmur, but took it all just as her goats bore all things, yielding their necks, almost, as it

were, cheerfully, to her blunt knife, upon the rare occasions when she found herself constrained to kill one for her food.

Waking and dozing, she passed through the hottest hours when even palm trees drooped, and the tired earth appears to groan under the fury of the sun.

Then rising up refreshed, she led her ass to water at the stream, watching him drink amongst the stones, whitened with the salt scum, which in dry seasons floats upon all rivers in that land.

Mounting, she struck into the sandy deep-worn track which, fringed with feathery tamarisks, led out into the plain. Like a faint cloud on the horizon rose the white city where the Prophet dwelt, and as the ass shuffled along, travellers from many paths passed by, and the road grew plainer as she advanced upon her way.

Horsemen, seated high above their horses in their chair saddles, ambled along, their spears held sloping backwards or trailing in the dust. Meeting each other on the way, they whirled and charged, drawing up short when near and going through the evolutions of the "Jerid," and then with a brief "Peace," again becoming grave and silent, they ambled on, their straight sharp spurs pressed to their horses' sides.

Camels with bales of goods, covered with sheepskin or with striped cloth, swayed onward in long lines, their heads moving alternately about, as if they were engaged in some strange dance. Asses, with piles of brushwood covering

them to their ears, slid past like animated haystacks, and men on foot veiled to the eyes, barefooted, with their slippers in their hands, or wearing sandals, tramped along the road. Pack-mules, with bundles of chopped straw packed hard in nets, or carrying loads of fresh-cut barley or of grass, passed by, their riders sitting sideways on the loads, or, running at their tails with one hand on their quarters, seemed to push on their beasts, as with the curses, without which no mule will move, they whiled away the time. A fine red dust enveloped everything as in a sand storm, turning burnouses and haiks brown, and caking thickly on the sweaty faces of the men.

Nearing the city gates the crush grew thicker, till at last a constant stream of people blocked the way, jostling and pushing, but good-humouredly, after the way of those to whom time is the chiefest property they own.

Dark rose the crenellated walls, and the white gate made a strange blot of light in the surrounding brown of plain and roads and mud-built houses of the town.

Entering upon the cobbled causeway, she passed through the gate, and in a corner, squatting on the ground, saw the scribes writing, the spearmen lounging in the twisted passage with their spears stacked against the wall. Then the great rush of travellers bore her as on a wave into the precincts of the town.

She rode by heaps of rubbish, on which lay chickens and dead dogs, with scraps of leather, camels' bones, and



all the jetsam of a hundred years, burned by the sun till they became innocuous, but yet sending out odours which are indeed the very perfumes of Araby the blest.

Huts made of canes, near which grew castor-oil plants, fringed the edge of the high dunghill of the town, and round it curs, lean, mangy, and as wild as jackals, slept with a bloodshot eye half open, ready to rush and bark at anyone who ventured to infringe upon the limits of their sphere of influence.

She passed the sandy horse-market, where auctioneers, standing up in their stirrups with a switch between their teeth, circled and wheeled their horses as a seagull turns upon the wing, or, starting them full speed, stopped them with open mouth and foam-flecked bit, turned suddenly to statues, just at the feet of the impassive bystanders, who showed their admiration but by a gluttural "Wah," or gravely interjected "Allah," as they endeavoured to press home some lie, too gross to pass upon its merits, even in that bright atmosphere of truth which in all lands encompasses the horse.

A second gate she passed, in which more tribesmen lounged, their horses hobbled, and themselves stretched out on mats, and the tired pilgrim found herself in a long cobbled street, on which her ass skated and slipped about, being accustomed to the desert sands. In it the dyers plied their craft, their arms stained blue or red, as they plunged hanks of wool into their vats, from which a thick dark

## *Faith*

steam rose, filling the air with vapours as from a solfatara, or such as rises from those islands in the west, known to those daring men "who ride that huge unwieldy beast, the sea, like fools, trembling upon its waves in hollow logs," and braving death upon that element which Allah has not given to his faithful to subdue. Smiths and artificers in brass and those who ply the bellows, sweating and keeping up a coil, unfit for council, but by whose labour and the wasting of whose frames cities are rendered stable, and states who cherish them set their foundations like wise builders on a rock, she passed.

Stopping, the pilgrim asked from a white-bearded man where in the city did the Prophet sit, and if the faithful, even the faithful such as she, had easy access to the person of the man whom God had chosen as his vicegerent upon earth.

Stroking his beard, the elder made reply: "Praise be to God, the One, our Lord Mohammed keeps no state. He sits within the mosque which we of Mecca call Masjida n'Nabi, with his companions, talking and teaching, and at times is silent, as his friends think, communing with the Lord. All can approach him, and if thou hast anything to ask, tether thine ass at the mosque door and go in boldly, and thou wilt be received."

The pilgrim gave "the Peace," and passed along in the dense crowd, in which camels and mules, with horses, ne-

groes, tribesmen, sellers of sweetmeats, beggars, and water-carriers, all swelled the press.

Again she entered into streets, streets, and more streets. She threaded through bazaars where saddle-makers wrought, bending the camels' shoulder bones to form the trees, and stretching unshrunk mare's hide over all. Crouched in their booths, they sat like josses in a Chinese temple, sewing elaborate patterns, plaiting stirrup leathers, and cutting out long Arab reins which dangle almost to the ground. Before their booths stood wild-eyed Bedouins, their hair worn long and greased with mutton fat till it shone glossy as a raven's wing. They chattered long for everything they bought. Spurs, reins, or saddle-cloths were all important to them, therefore they took each piece up separately, appraised it to its disadvantage, and often made pretence to go away calling down maledictions on the head of him who for his goods wished to be paid in life's blood of the poor. Yet they returned, and, after much expenditure of eloquence, bore off their purchase, as if they feared that robbers would deprive them of their prize, hiding it cautiously under the folds of their brown goat's-hair cloaks, or stowed in the recesses of their saddle-bags.

A smell of spices showed the tired wanderer that she approached the Kaiseria, wherein dwell those who deal in saffron, pepper, anise, and cummin, asafoetida, cloves, nutmegs, cinnamon, sugar and all the merchandise which is

### *Faith*

brought over sea by ship to Yembo, and then conveyed to Mecca and Medina upon camels' backs.

Stopping an instant where a Jaui had his wares displayed, she bought an ounce of semsin, knowing Abdallah's son had three things specially in which he took delight, women, scents, and meat, but not knowing that of the first two, as his wife Ayesha said in years to come, he had his fill, but never of the third. The Kaiseria left behind, she felt her heart beat as she neared the mosque.

Simple it stood on a bare space of sand, all made of palm trees hewn foursquare, the walls of cane and of mud, the roof of palm leaves over the mihráb—simple and only seven cubits high, and yet a fane in which the pæan to the God of Battles echoed so loudly that its last blast was heard in Aquitaine, in farthest Hind, Irac, in China, and by the marshy shores of the Lake Chad.

As she drew near the mosque not knowing (as a woman) how to pray, she yet continued muttering something which, whilst no doubt strengthening her soul, was to the full as acceptable to the One God as it were framed after the strictest canon of the Moslem law. Then, sliding to the ground, she tied her ass's feet with a palmetto cord, and taking in her hand her ounce of semsin as an offering, passed into the court.

Under the orange trees a marble fountain played, stained here and there by time, murmuring its never-ending prayer, gladdening the souls of men with its faint music,

and serving as a drinking-place to countless birds, who, after drinking, washed, and then, flying back to the trees, chanted their praises to the giver of their lives.

A little while she lingered, and then, after the fashion of her race, which, desert born, cannot pass running water, even if they are being led to death, without a draught, she stopped and drank. Then, lifting up her eyes, she saw a group seated beneath a palm tree, and at once felt her eyes had been considered worthy to behold the man whom, of all men, his Maker in his life had pardoned and set His seal upon his shoulder as a memorial of His grace.

As she drew near she marked the Prophet, the Promised, the Blessed One, who in the middle of his friends sat silently as they discussed or prayed.

Of middle height he was and strongly made, his colour fair, his hair worn long and parted, neither exactly curling nor yet smooth, his beard well shaped and flecked with silver here and there, clipped close upon his upper lip; and about the whole man an air of neatness and of cleanliness. His dress was simple, for, hanging to the middle of his calf, appeared his undershirt, and over it he wore, as it fell out upon that day, a fine striped mantle from the Yemen, which he wrapped round about him tightly after the fashion of a coat; his shoes, which lay beside him, were of the fashion of the Hadrhamút, with thongs and clouted; his staff lay near to them, and as he spoke, he beat with his left hand upon the right, and often smiled so that his teeth

appeared as white as hailstones, new fallen on the grass after an April storm.

Advancing to the group, the pilgrim gave "the Peace," and then tendering her offering, stood silent in the sight of all the company. Fear sealed her lips, and sweat ran down her cheeks as she gazed on the face of him to whom the Lord of Hosts had spoken, giving him power both to unloose and bind.

Gently he spoke, and lifting up his hand, said: "Mother, what is it you seek, and why this offering?"

Then courage came to her, and words which all the Arabs have at their command, and she poured forth her troubles, telling the prophet of her loneliness, her goats, her hut, of her lost husband and her sons all slain in battle, in the service of the Lord. She asked him why her sex was barred from Paradise, and if the prophet would exclude Ámina, she who bore him, from the regions of the blessed. With the direct and homely logic of her race, she pressed her claims.

Well did she set out woman's life, how she bore children in sore suffering, reared them in trouble and anxiety, moulded and formed their minds in childhood, as she had moulded and formed their bodies in the womb.

When she had finished she stood silent, anxiously waiting a reply, whilst on the faces of the fellowship there came a look as if they too remembered those who in tents and duars on the plains had nurtured them, but no one spoke,



for the respect they bore to him who, simply clad as they, was yet superior to all created men.

Long did he muse, no doubt remembering Kadija, and how she clave to him in evil and in good report, when all men scoffed, and then opening his lips he gave his judgment on the pilgrim's statement of the case.

"Allah," he said, "has willed it that no old woman enter Paradise, therefore depart, and go in peace, and trouble not the prophet of the Lord."

Tears rose to Rahma's eyes, and she stood turned to stone, and through the company there ran a murmur of compassion for her suffering. Then stretching out his hand, Mohammed smiled and said: "Mother, Allah has willed it as I declared to you, but as his power is infinite, at the last day, it may be he will make you young again, and you shall enter into the regions of the blessed, and sit beside the Perfect Ones, the four, who of all women have found favour in his sight."

He ceased, and opening the offered packet, took the semsin in his hand, and eagerly inhaled the scent, and Rahma, having thanked him, stooped down and kissed the fringes of his striped Yemen mantle, then straightening herself as she had been a girl, passed through the courtyard, mounted on her ass and struck into the plain.



*From*  
HIS PEOPLE  
*1906*



## *Signalled*

THE Casino rooms were crowded. French, English, Poles, Russians, and an occasional Japanese, looking just like a monkey who had escaped from freedom in the woods and voluntarily had put the chains of trousers and of coats about his limbs, all jostled in the throng. Above them hung the concentrated scent of all the perspirations of their different races, mingled with every essence that the perfumer's art affords to mitigate the odours which humanity distils. All were well dressed, and eighteen centuries of culture and of care had culminated in making every one alike. Thus all spoke French, of course with varying accents; but as they all read the same books, had the same thoughts, and wore the selfsame clothes, the accident of accent did not separate them, and they formed one immense, well-scented family as to exteriors, though with their hands all secretly raised against each other, and their tongues wagging ceaselessly in calumny, just as a bulrush wags by the edge of some old mill-race, half filled up with mud.

All round the tables men and women stood, pushing and elbowing, and with their eyes fixed on the money on the cloth, adoringly, as it had been the Holy Grail and they

### *Signalled*

all vowed to search for and to grasp it, at the peril of their souls.

Men who at home were magistrates and pillars of a church, or members of some county council, gazed at the demi-mondaines as they went to and fro brushing against the players to attract attention, with their eyes aflame or with a swinish puckering of their lips which spoke of lust unsatisfied, not from religious principles, but from the fear of spies and interfering friends.

They eyed the women just as a starving dog looks at a butcher's shop, sideways and lurkingly, for fear a blow may fall upon him, out of some quarter unforeseen. Smartly dressed women looked at their sisters of the demi-monde half with dislike half with approval, as if they somehow understood that they, although they were transgressors of trades-union rules, were helping them in their life's strife with man; whilst others with the colour rising in their cheeks pressed up against them as they passed, just as cats press against a chair, meeting their eyes with a bold comprehending stare. Remote from all the rest in a cane rocking-chair there sat a girl, thin, dark, and dressed quite quietly, so quietly that at first sight you might have taken her for a young married woman who had got separated from her friends and had sat down to rest.

Her high-heeled shoes just tapped upon the ground as the chair rocked, and as it balanced to and fro revealed her stockings half way up the calf, so fine and worked so open,



### *Signalled*

that it appeared the hair upon the flesh might pass between the stitching, just as a little fish escapes through the fine meshes of a net.

Men passed before her, in the half-sneaking and half-swaggering way that men assume before a woman whom they have held between their arms a night or two ago, and whom they dare not recognize in public, although they want the world to see that they are well acquainted, and in its censure half applaud the fact. Their hands involuntarily just touched their hats, and as they looked an inch or two above her head murmured a greeting, and then straightening their legs they fell into a strut, as of a bull-fighter who has been nearly caught by the bull's horns, and wants the crowd to think he is not frightened as he edges to the limits of the ring. She gave her salutation by a half rising of her eyebrows, and a faint smile, half of amusement and half contempt, just flickered on her lips, as some one with his wife or daughter on his arm suddenly flushed or paled and looked with interest at the chandelier as he passed opposite her chair. Callow and fledgling youths boldly saluted her, colouring as they did so to their hair, whilst grave and decorated men just raised their eyes, and fat provincials wildly plunged and bolted at the sight of her, just like young horses faced suddenly in a deep lane by the fierce rattle of a motor-car.

Still nothing in her dress or manner was unlike that of a hundred other women in the rooms, as she sat quietly at

### *Signalled*

the receipt of custom, watching her various acquaintances as they passed by give by their guilty looks the lie both to the faith and the morality they held, and which, no doubt, she held herself as sacred, and as fixed as are the poles, although she saw them outraged in her person twenty times a week, just as in Spain, 'tis said, that a society founded to protect the lower animals, finding itself in difficulties, arranged a bull-fight to increase its funds and clear away its debts.

But as she sat indifferent, waiting what fate should send her, to her amazement, another girl, but little younger than herself, sat down beside her, and with "*Il fait tray sho naisce pars,*" fell into conversation with her as easily as if they had been friends.

The girl who knew the world glanced at her quickly, half thinking that the stranger came from some island in the *Ægean* Sea, but saw at once her island lay to the north, and that she had addressed her in pure innocence of heart.

Though she had often seen fair English girls, dressed in short skirts, boisterous in manner, fresh-coloured and half manlike in their ways, striding along as if their knees would burst their petticoats, this was the first time she had met or spoken to one, and the experience somehow brought the blood into her cheeks.

"Yes, it is hot," she said, and stole a glance half of amazement, half approbation, at the fresh English girl, who

### *Signalled*

seated by her side seemed quite unconscious of the difference in their lives and talked so naturally and in such curious French. She marked her sunburned hands, gloveless and strong as those of a young man, and, made observant by the manner of her life, saw she was pretty at a glance, although her clothes were ugly and her fair hair all gathered in a knot. As she thought upon this thing and on that, and on the shielded life of the fair English girl, so little younger than herself, and on her own, a flush rose on her face as she perceived that she was shy before the other's innocence and want of knowledge of the world. At first the conversation languished, till the stranger, who had sat down with so much lack of ceremony beside her, looking her over with wide-open eyes, said: "I liked the look of you, as I was straying up and down, looking out for my mother, who had got lost whilst I was watching the roulette. You looked so pretty, and you are well dressed, you know you are, and so does everyone; all the men look at you, when they pass by, just as a schoolboy at a cake in a shop-window. How foolish they all are."

Used to all kinds of compliments point-blank, none that she ever had received, in all her life, had put her to such difficulty, and once again she stole a look at her fair complimenter's face to reassure herself that she was really as innocent as she appeared to be. "Well dressed," she murmured, "well, any women likes to be well dressed." To

### *Signalled*

such a commonplace of femininity no answer was required beyond a simple affirmation, and a look of admiration at the clothes.

"Why, what a lot of men you know!" the English girl exclaimed, as counts and viscounts whom she knew by name walked by, as they sat talking, staring a little at the strange companionship of the two girls, all making a half recognition as they passed. "Why is it, none of them take off their hats—I thought that Frenchmen always were polite?"

Then as she got no answer, but a tapping of her companion's heels upon the floor, and a faint blush as of annoyance at her words, fearing she had offended her acquaintance, whom she already had begun to admire on account of her nice clothes, and evident knowledge of the world, she said, just as a schoolboy might have said: "It's awful hot in here. Would you mind going out into the air, and we can sit and talk?" The other, like a person in a dream, got up and followed her, and the two girls walked through the crowd, the English girl quite unconcerned, pushing her way, after the fashion of a forward player in a football team, smiling and only anxious to get out into the air. The other, red and uncomfortable, but hypnotized by the frank manners and good faith of her she followed, hardly knew where she was until she found herself seated in a cane chair upon the terrace, and heard her guide say: "Well, this is better than the stuffy room."

From the Casino came the hum of voices, and points of

### *Signalled*

light seemed to break through the windows, and a faint smell of perspiration and stale scent defiled the atmosphere as it came floating up to where they sat. A breeze sprang up and cleared away the fleecy clouds before the moon, whose rays, half deadened by the glare of the electric lamps upon the terrace, seemed to be concentrated shyly on the magnolia trees which formed the background of the artificial scene, falling on their metallic-looking leaves, which it subdued and turned to plates of silver in its light. Moths hung about the great electric lamps, like men about a courtesan, and seemed to swim in the long beam of light which issued from the globes. Sometimes they flew against the glass with a dull furry noise, and then fell stunned and lay upon the paths, with their wings fluttering, until some high-heeled shoe, just peeping out from underneath a cataract of lace, crushed them to pulp upon the stones, or carried off their bodies sticking to the sole.

Silence fell on the girls as, walking to the balustrade, they stood and looked over the wide white road, across the lawn set with its bunches of white pampas-grass and of euonymus, upon the sea, which stretched out cool and clean and undefiled even by all the tawdriness of the Casino and its lights. Up from the shores there came a long-drawn sigh as if the waves had brought to land the last expiring breath of some lost sailor as they swirled upon the beach. The light air stirred the curls upon the foreheads of the girls, and the mysterious companionship of youth drew them together

### *Signalled*

without words making them feel a bond of sympathy.

Tears stood in the dark eyes of the French girl, she did not quite know why, and something seemed to force her to bestow her confidence upon the girl who stood beside her, although she felt it would be useless, as she could never understand.

As she stood hesitating, the other, seeing her tears, caught at her hands and said: "I say, whatever is the matter? I am so sorry. Tell us about it, it will do you good. Is it about any of those bounders who grinned at you, and did not raise their hats?"

The other looked at her, and struggling to keep back her tears, said: "No, no, not about any man, I hate them all . . . that is, I am not sure . . . I think one is not quite so horrible as all the rest—but then I have no right to talk to you, so innocent, about such things." She felt the hand of her companion tighten on her own, and all her sorrows running from her heart; her prostituted youth, the recollection of her home, perhaps the thought of the one man less horrible than were the others, forced her to speak and lay her head upon the shoulder of the mysterious friend, who had come as it were out of the depths to comfort her.

As she was struggling to choke down her tears and speak, and as the English girl stood wondering, but sympathetic and expectant, clasping her hands in hers, a strong high voice broke through the stillness of the night.

"Ethel, my dear," it said, "where have you got to? We



### *Signalled*

have been looking for you for the last hour, and father is so cross." The girls just pressed each other's hands and separated, as ships which have but signalled may be parted by a mist, without the time to make out either their numbers or the ports from which they hail.

## *A Memory of Parnell*

**H**E always seemed to me a creature from another world, or a survival of some older type of man. Not that in ordinary respects he differed from the usual race of all mankind, having their passions, weaknesses, and all the rest developed to the full, together with an incapacity to get his stirrup-leather the same length, on horseback when he rode. His strangeness was, as is the strangeness of a faun or hamadryad, beings we all know did exist and have their being, so strongly has their personality been drawn for us and petrified in stone.

Occasionally we feel that characters in poems and in pictures are far more real than the sham human beings who go about in millions, pretending to be men.

The subject of my recollection, and how sad it is to rack the half-sealed chambers of the mind for the impressions of dead friends left on it, as the sun leaves pictures, so some think, indelible on every stone, was one of those whose death strikes us as an injustice and in some way a mistake.

Crossing St. James's Street I well remember seeing on a bill, "Death of the Irish Leader," and thinking that it was some error of the press.

Your politician dies, and it appears quite natural. Last

## *A Memory of Parnell*

week he had his knighthood; a month ago became the last of all the peers, received the garter at the last royal birthday, and now resumes the sleep which was but three parts broken during the whole course of his life. One pauses, recollects his small peculiarities, his tricks of speech and manner, and then forgets him, half-pitying, half with contempt, thinking an ill-graced actor has passed through the wings, into the freedom of the street, and left behind him nothing but the remembrance of his faults, when once the electro-plated glamour of the daily press has been rubbed off, leaving the tin all bare.

But when a man, such as was Parnell, passes, all the infirmities of life fall off, and only his originality and greatness stay. Then it becomes a marvel that the multitude of rats has been the undoing of the lion. One tries to cipher out in what his influence lay, then gives it up, and is content to say: "I knew him, may he rest well at last."

In the dull, drab and common world of English life where everything is done upon the lowest level that the intellect of man can compass, in which our Gladdies and our Dizzies, with Pam and Bright and Buckshot Forster and the rest, appear like vestrymen unglorified, a figure such as his seemed almost insolent.

It is too soon perhaps to try to mark his place in history, but since Old Noll (hero in England and in Ireland devil), perhaps no stronger character has played its part upon the boards of the great theatre at Westminster. He had no elo-

## *A Memory of Parnell*

quence as it is generally appraised, although at times the intensity of hate he bore us and our twaddling institutions, gave him a glacial fire, which scorched even the dull wet-blankets of the House, where all is commonplace.

He was not deeply read, not even in the history of the land for which he fought. He was not humorous, nor had he wit, but now and then inflections came into his voice, which stirred one more than all the spurred-up caperings of orators, as when he finished up a phrase with, "This is going on today in Ireland," in which he put such force and venom that the word Ireland seemed to die upon his lips in froth.

I cannot think of him as popular even at home upon his own estate, nor yet at school, still less with his own followers, especially with those of them who sold their Lord, and quite omitted to make sure the thirty pieces should be paid; and when they lost them did not have the grace to hang themselves.

Not popular, in the hail-fellow-well-met and loudly cheered conception of the word, but yet with an attraction for all women whom he came across, who were drawn to him by his careless treatment of them, and by the wish that nature has implanted in their sex, to be the rulers of all men who stand above their kind.

Straying about the House of Commons after the fashion of a new boy at a school, I chanced to sit down quite un-

## *A Memory of Parnell*

thinkingly upon a bench. An Irish legislator edged up and whispered: "You're sitting in his seat."

To this I answered something about the seats being free unless they had a name attached to them, and, I fear, bade my interlocutor fare to Gehenna by the shortest route. A gentle voice behind me almost whispered in my ear: "Quite right, the seats are free."

This laid the first stone to the building of a desultory friendship which lasted till his death.

Occasionally we dined together, not talking very much, as we had nothing very much in common, except a love of horses.

Of them Parnell knew little, and the little that I knew was almost absolutely from the colonial point of view, so that our theories did not conflict, as often happens between friends. On politics we never talked, as upon almost every point we disagreed, he leading a great party, I being a mere unit of an amorphous crowd of Nonconformists, Temperance Reformers, Deceased Wife's Sisters Monomaniacs, and Single Taxers, with all the faddists and dried fruit of outworn Liberal politics which at that time the tide of Liberalism had left like jellyfish and seaweed, stranded and dying on the beach.

And what a beach it was, strewn with the dead remains of Leagues and Federations and Societies, mostly composed of Treasurer and Secretary, long-haired and stammering

## *A Memory of Parnell*

speakers, all with their theories of prompt regeneration for the body politic, and a collecting box to shove beneath the public's nose.

We raved, we ranted, and we called on Englishmen to rise, to embrace the movement and ourselves, and comprehend that social and political emancipation was at hand and that we were the men.

Amongst this herd of addle-brained and sometimes generous, sometimes self-interested reformers (but in all instances belated), which the late lowering of the franchise had let loose upon the world, and most of whom had not sufficient wit to run a coffee-stall, the figure of Parnell stood out, as the Old Man of Hoy stands out against the sea. The little waves of the above referred to muddletonians, who, with their iteration damnable and advocacy of reforms long dead, surged round him, almost unnoticed and unnoticeable.

The larger scum of Liberal and Conservative, each again occupied with questions which had long been superannuated, left him unmoved.

The party leaders feared and hated him, for he despised them, and his outlook upon politics seemed but to point out all their lack of strength and incapacity.

Gladstone, who though in talk for fifty years, never contrived to say a single thing either original or worth remembering, was over-balanced by him, and Salisbury looked on him as Turk looks at a native Christian who rebels,



### *A Memory of Parnell*

whilst Morley, from the dreary, arid heights of Mount Philosophus, admired and wondered but supported loyally, although perhaps feeling a little hurt at having to play the second violin to one who knew no Greek. Balfour, by virtue of his æstheticism, was repelled, and did not hesitate to shoot out mildly philosophic lips. Churchill admired, and perhaps intrigued with him whom without doubt he thought a rebel, but in politics and love all that succeeds is fair. Chamberlain very likely dreamed of some municipal Home Rule, with Parnell as a county councillor glorified, a parliament for gas and sewage, existing by his will in Dublin, and all the Irish Nationalists, apparelled in frieze coats and battered hats stuck with dudheens, shillelaghs in their hands, dancing round and singing "Long live Birmingham!"

No one else counted, and in this motley crew of dreamers and of dullards, with here and there an able man upon the make, to give consistency, the Irish leader jostled for a place.

Whatever were his faults, and I suppose that being human he had many of them, one thing is clear to me, that above all he hated England and her ways. With what a seething coldness, as of ice upon the edges of a crater, he would say "your country" or "your Queen." Even the House of Commons, stupid as it was, would shiver, and red-faced Tory Squires, and Nonconformists reared on seed-cake and lemonade, rise in their seats, shaking their mottled or their plebeian fists at his calm smiling face.

## *A Memory of Parnell*

It did us good to hear him stammer through a speech, misquoting all his notes, halting and trying back, and pouring all the vitriol of his contempt upon us as we sat.

It seemed as if some sort of incoherent Daniel had come to judgment and was about to pass his sentence on us all.

The British Parliament for generations had listened to the tirades of all kinds of Irishmen, but they had all been of another sort and different magnitude.

In them, the Saxon was a tyrant and a brute, a sort of Juggernaut, feared and yet envied, who had laid waste the land. But now he figured as an ass, and as ridiculous, whilst all the Irishry, taking their cue from their chief's speeches, publicly thanked their gods that they were Irish, and professed to think that the word English, applied with reference to themselves, was more than infidel, and quite as bad as Protestant, or thief. Thus did the Chief make it impossible for British ministers to take up the "poor Patrick" attitude, which in the past had always been a trump.

No one, I think, was ever hated by the House as was Parnell, and he returned its hate a hundredfold, taking delight in gibing at it, and making it absurd.

Nothing offended him so much as when some hypocritical "Noncon," whom he and Gladstone had kicked round into Home Rule, would talk about the "union of our hearts," and prophesy that soon all difference of race would be obliterated. Then as he ground his teeth, and his pale cheek grew white with rage, he sometimes muttered "Damn

## *A Memory of Parnell*

them," with so much unction and such fervency, that one felt sure his prayer, if not immediately vouchsafed, would yet be taken "ad avizandum," as the lawyers say, and perhaps be of avail. But whether it was answered, or fell harmless on the unwholesome air of Parliament, it had the effect somehow of setting one a-thinking of how great a fraud the British Empire was, and rousing one out of the feeling of sublime contentment with ourselves, with which we of the Celto-Saxon race are prone to look at all things here below, knowing that we enjoy a place apart and specially reserved for us in mansions in the skies with all repairs performed for us, by the Creator of the World.

When we debated with much circumstance, and with citation of innumerable unnecessary figures (the ever-present refuge of a dullard in a speech), some weighty matter of a railroad in the Midland Counties, it was a sight to see the Irish Leader lounge into the House, stroking his beard and pulling his moustache with long white fingers, on which dull sparkled his historic sapphire ring. He would remark half confidentially to his lieutenant: "Biggar, I think that this debate ought not to finish before twelve o'clock." To which his Sancho Panza would reply: "It's quite impossible; I've let the boys away." Then, absently, as if he had never seen the man, or at that instant suddenly became aware that he persisted still in living, Parnell would say: "Tell Gallagher to speak." "Gallagher, Sir, the only thing he knows is butter." "Well, let him speak on butter."

## *A Memory of Parnell*

And in an instant Gallagher would rise, quite unprepared, and speaking, maybe, for the first time in that august assembly which, as a general rule, strikes us of the predominant partnership stark dumb and curdles all our brains.

With figures and with facts, which all looked feasible, the string-pulled member-marionette would thunder forth on the injustice done to Irish industries in general, and that to Irish butter in particular, by the abominable Bill before the House. After an hour, with perspiration running down his face, he would begin to talk upon the Irish question as a whole, be pulled up by the Speaker, engage in wrangles with the Tories, and speak and speak, with illustrations of his theme, with so much vigour and such aptness, that you began to think a hideous wrong was going to be done. Just about midnight Parnell might saunter in and either say: "I think I will not speak," or: "Biggar, tell that fool to stop; I wish to say a word." Then word would somehow be conveyed to the rapt orator, who would subside, perhaps in the very middle of a phrase, and Parnell, rising, would proceed, apparently quite coldly, but with shut fists, and a light foam about the corners of his mouth, to distil vitriol, drop by drop, into the very souls of Englishmen, till Gladstone, putting on his hat, would leave the House, and comfortable Liberals, who had been cultivating a Cork or Limerick brogue, by means of which to show goodwill to Ireland, would shiver in their broadcloth coats, and curse the day that made him their ally.

## *A Memory of Parnell*

No one, I think, since Oliver the Great and Good (I write for the mere Englishry), has made the House of Commons tremble to its cowardly depths as did Parnell, and never Irishman before or since his time, if we except Hugh Roe O'Neill, has ever treated, upon equal terms, with the old English foe.

Undoubtedly, he both despised and hated Gladstone, who on his part showed plainly that he was in the presence of a stronger man, and though after his death he damned him with faint praise, could not have been much disappointed when, after his nine days' waiting, the Nonconformist cat jumped as it did, and shut Home Rule off for a hundred years.

Not that I think that Gladstone did not believe in Ireland's wrongs, but that he did not wish to see an Irish parliament led by a man far stronger than himself.

During the days of Sturm und Drang when he was fighting for his soul, I saw him now and then as one sees figures in a dream.

Once seated in an old-fashioned eating-house off the Strand, he wandered in, and seeing me, sat down and talked during the dinner which he could not eat. We spoke of horses, of which, as I have said, he knew but little, and I not overmuch, and then sauntered down to the House, to find it counted out.

Then came his death and funeral, with, as it seemed, no one ashamed in Ireland, and almost everybody secretly

### *A Memory of Parnell*

pleased in London, as if they felt an enemy of England was gone, as in fact was the case, for he who lets a Briton see he does not reverence him and his country, commits the crime against the British Holy Ghost, a spirit plethoric and heavy, generous but overbearing, and as well stuffed with pride as is an airship or a fire-balloon with gas.

Let him sleep well, a Protestant amongst the serried graves of those who lie looking towards Rome, whilst they await the Trumpet's call. A Saxon leader of a Celtic race, a man who, though no orator, yet held enthralled a parliament that lives on talk. Well may his spirit hover hesitatingly between the towers of Westminster, where he enforced respect, and the grey columns upon College Green, the unfaithful Mecca, which he never lived to reach.



*From*  
FAITH  
*1909*



## *Sor Candida and the Bird*

THE long grey buildings of the convent with their overhanging red-tiled roofs threw a refreshing shadow on the heated street. The sun-parched trees stood stiff and motionless as sentinels frozen at their posts. For months it had not rained in Avila. For miles on every side of the old town, the stone-strewn plains were heated like a kiln. The dark grey walls gave out the heat as you passed by and touched them with your hand. The distant mountains shivered in the heat. Upon the plains the last dead stalks of fennel loomed in the mirage of the heat like palm trees in the sand. Lakes formed in front of men upon their mules, their faces shielded from the scorching sun by handkerchiefs, and with their stiff Castilian hats pulled down almost upon their shoulders to protect their necks, and then as the mules clattered on the stones, or brushed against the withered herbage with a crackling noise, took themselves further off, as fortune does in life, after one tantalizing glance. Sheep and the cattle stood round the deep-dug wells, their heads bowed low, and their flanks heaving in the sun, waiting till evening for the coming of the men to draw the water in the long leathern bags. The yellow swirling rivers had dried up, leaving the mud as hard

### *Sor Candida and the Bird*

as kaolin, and here and there held thick, green water, with a dead horse or cow, bloated and swollen enormously, just floating on the top. All nature suffered with the heat, and birds approached the houses seeking help, just as they do in northern climates in the frost.

Is there at bottom some mysterious bond between all living things, which, but for our religion and conceit, should have made all the animals and us one clan? Who knows? Upon the strip of sand, which in old Spanish towns lies at the edges of the streets (just where the cobbles end), and makes a sort of neutral territory between them and the gutter, right opposite the convent door, a bird lay fluttering with its beak open, and its eyes almost closed. It lay half choking in the sun, its beady eyes becoming glazed, and its perhaps immortal little spirit just trembling to be free and join the universal soul; a minute or two more and it would have gone to swell the army of tired soldiers, camels, and horses who have died of thirst amongst the sands. It may be, as they say in Spain, God was not willing, or the slight fluttering of the feathers raised a little dust, for at that moment a side door opened, and with a cautious glance to see that no one was about, a nun stepped out, and taking up the bird, bore it into the shade. It lay almost expiring in her hand as she, with many little cries of pity, took a piece of rag and gently dropped some water in its mouth. As the drops followed one another, it slowly came back to the life it had so nearly left. Its head became less

### *Sor Candida and the Bird*

languid, and its eyes brighter, until at last it feebly pecked the hand that held it, making the nun smile, muttering it acted just like a Christian, as she released it, and let it hop about her cell. Then taking up a cane, she split it for a perch, and stuck it in the darkest corner of the cell, making some holes in the rough plastering. All had gone well so far, and on its perch the bird sat resting, and recovering its strength. Quickly she made a little cage out of split canes, not thinking for a moment that after giving life she thus would take away life's chiefest treasure—liberty; but all in tender heart. The cage contrived, and the revived and still half-drooping little bird duly inducted to its prison, she put a broken saucer and some bread-crumbs by its side, and sat down, proud and happy with her work.

Sor Candida was tall and dark, with large black eyes and a slight pencilling of hair upon her upper lip. Though she had left the world and all its vanities, losing her liberty, perhaps to save herself from want, just as she had herself deprived the bird of his for the same cause, her walk was springy, and she retained that easy swinging of the hips which is the race mark of the women of the Spains. Had she been in the world, no doubt, as she walked through the plaza or the street, "God bless your mother," "Long live grace," and other cries of admiration would have followed her, and even as it was, the priests who visited the convent, and talked occasionally in the dark "*locutorio*" through the grating to the nuns, would sometimes say to one another

### *Sor Candida and the Bird*

that "Sister Candida was the fine essence of true salt, a pearl that God Himself, no doubt, was pleased to wear." In the same way, a bullfighter who has left the ring, if he pass near a bull, rarely refrains from "challenging," as those intelligent in such things say, by shouting loudly, and by stamping with his feet.

Her happiness was at its height, and she was praising God for having sent her just in time (another proof, if one were wanted, of His goodness towards all created things; well is it said that not a sparrow falls without His ken) to save the little life, and thinking to herself what name to give her prisoner, when a doubt arose. Her heart stopped beating for a moment, as she thought the convent rules allowed no property. Nothing but articles of individual use, a rosary, a book of hours, a hair shirt, or a scourge, was fitting for a nun professed, of the discalced and blessed order, which the great Saint of Avila herself had purified. Pets were not to be thought of, and she reflected that it seemed ages since she had known the bird, and he on his part twisted round his head, seeming to watch her movements in the cell.

All might have yet been well, had she but yielded to that unstable guide, mere reason, and opening the cell door, allowed the bird to fly. He would have launched himself into the air with a glad chirp, for by this time the heat had moderated as eventide drew near, and flown refreshed to greet his friends, and tell them in the trees, or in the corner where he had his little home beneath the overhanging roof



### *Sor Candida and the Bird*

of some high belfry, of the amazing charity of a great being, tall as is a tower.

Sor Candida, young, kindly, and deprived of love by the religious life, felt if she let her new companion go that she would feel as does a man cast on a desert island with but one fellow, if that fellow dies.

Surely God would not be enraged if she allowed the bird to stay! Had He not sent him to her, or her to him, just in the nick of time? He looked so pretty with his round beady eyes, which followed her about. Besides, she felt he was too weak to fly, so as the convent bell rang out for benediction, and the shadows lengthened, stretching across the cell till they bathed half of it in a cool darkness, she took a handkerchief, and having covered up the cage, hurried off to the choir.

Perhaps her thoughts strayed from the contemplation of the Saviour's passion, realistically set forth ("to a bad Christ, much blood"), and from the antiphones, to her own cell, where in a corner the precious bird was sleeping, after his escape. The office over, all the nuns walked in the garden, pacing to and fro, glad to escape the heat the stones threw out at sunset, and to enjoy the air. Some sat and talked about the little gossip of the place, whilst others roamed about alone, turning incessantly when they reached the wall, just like wild animals shut in a cage in public gardens, to be gaped upon by fools. Others, who had the gift of prayer, sat alone enrapt, their lips just moving, and their

### *Sor Candida and the Bird*

beads slipping mechanically between their fingers as their souls strove to join themselves with God. Friends walked about in pairs, chattering and laughing almost as gaily as girls do in the world, and even pinching one another on the sly. And as they walked, the bell of the cathedral rang out, sounding as if, from the stiff arm of some recumbent warrior in the choir, a shield had fallen upon the stones, so martial was its clang.

The breeze just rustled in the trees, stirring their parched and thirsty leaves with a metallic sound. A coolness fell upon the land, and from the country came the lowing of the cows as they approached the well, where, since the sun had set, stood shepherds, their sheepskin jackets thrown upon the ground, as they strained on the rope which, passing through a wooden pulley, held a leathern bucket, just as in farthest Nabotha, Esau gave water to his herds.

So still the air was that the warning of the clock in the great tower upon the walls, before it struck, was heard across the town, whilst from the thirsty ground a scent of freshness came, as if to tell mankind that, down below the surface, all vegetation was alive though sleeping through the heat.

Still all against the convent rules, the bird continued to sing on, and in the summer mornings, before the enemy, the sun, came out declaring war upon mankind, Sor Candida's most intimate and dearest friends used to assemble stealthily and fill her cell, to hear its melody. The delightful

### *Sor Candida and the Bird*

sense of doing something wrong—surely stolen music is as sweet as stolen waters—increased their pleasure, and they would sit enrapt, closing their eyes, to hear it lift its little canticle.

Holding each other's hands they sat, whilst one placed at the door looked through a chink, to give the alarm if the superior should come upon her rounds. All prospered, and the bird waxed fat, fed with nefarious rape and hemp-seed, introduced contraband into the convent by a sympathizing lay sister who went into the world to buy provisions, and his sweet singing ravished the nuns into an ecstasy of innocent delight.

At times Sor Candida would say: "Sisters, it seems impossible, but that the Lord is pleased to hear the harmony the little one pours forth, all in His praise." And they, answering, would repeat gravely: "Yes, little sister, it must be so"; then they would push a piece of groundsel into the cage, for never had the garden of the convent been so free of weeds as since the advent of the little minstrel, saved so providentially to sing the praises of the Lord.

All went on well, day following day, and though no doubt the bird mourned for the reasonable converse of his kind, and wondered how the world wagged with his fellows, he still grew fat, as it is said did Silvio Pellico, although we have no record of his song.

But, one fine morning as they sat listening to the feathered psalmody, all lost in admiration, and with the ready

*Sor Candida and the Bird*

tear of simple souls glistening in all their eyes, a knock was heard, and the cell door flung open showed the superior standing in their midst. Sternly she gazed, her broad white tocas looking like driven snow against the dark brown habit which she wore, of the same make and quality as that worn by the foundress of their order, she who, although she sits at the right hand, perhaps by virtue even more of her humanity than of her saintship, is yet a colonel of artillery, where the blood-red and orange banner floats against the sky. Her rosary hung by her side, the beads of coral and the little chains which held them, hammer wrought, with the "María" made in Zaragoza, bearing the figure of the "Virgen del Pilar." A round medallion of the blessed foundress hung about her neck, and her bare feet, thrust into hempen sandals, were white and clean, the blue veins standing out upon the insteps, showing she followed the injunctions of her saint who said: "My daughters, it is dreadful to be foul." Her shale-black hair, half hidden by the tocas, was silvering at the temples, and her round, fat, good-tempered face was puckered to a frown.

"Daughters," she said, "what brings so many of you here into one cell, as if you were conspirators? You know our rules forbid one nun to go into another's cell without permission, and never with closed doors."

The nuns stood silent, cowering together like wild mares in a corral. Then from the corner of the cell there came a muffled chirp, where the cage, hastily covered with a pocket-

### *Sor Candida and the Bird*

handkerchief, did not exclude the light. The prioress made a step forward, and, uncovering the cage, saw at a glance the motive of the nuns' silence, and the offender against all her rules, serenely seated on his perch. Setting her face as sternly as she could, she said:

"Which of you is it who has brought this bird into the cell? All of you know that anything, animate or inanimate, which causes a nun's heart to stray from its allegiance to her spiritual husband, Christ, not only violates the spirit, but the letter of our rule."

Still no one answered, till, at last, pushed by the rest, Sor Candida, drying her tears and with one hand upon the little cage, as if to save it from the wrath of heaven, stood forth, and with the eloquence which has absorbed the entire activity of her race, in latter days, took up her parable.

She laid herself upon the mercy, both of heaven and the prioress; told how, from her window, she had seen the bird lie choking in the sand, felt for its little agony, and had remembered that, when upon the cross, our Lord had suffered all but thirst, without complaint, and how something, she knew not what, had bade her venture, although she knew that by thus stepping out into the street she had fallen into sin.

Then as her voice gained strength, and as she saw the encouraging glances of her fellow-culprits, she explained how that ("and this the prioress knew well") one sin leads to another, and by degrees all she had done seemed to grow

*Sor Candida and the Bird*

natural, and it at last appeared that she had known the little bird for years.

The prioress stood listening, letting her beads mechanically slip between her fingers, whilst her eyes now and then looked vacant, as if her thoughts were straying to the patio of some brown Castilian grange, where children played about, and where, just underneath the eaves, birds hung in cages, singing all the day.

The nuns all marked the look, and pressing closer to Sor Candida, encouraged her to speak. She told how, when the bird first sang, she thought the angels had come into the cell, and how she felt that all its singing was to God's glory, and then, the words half choking her in the sudden rush of explanation, she begged forgiveness, saying that if the prioress opened the cage and let the bird escape, she had better also open the convent door and thrust her out into the street. She stopped, and for a moment nothing was heard, but the nuns' stifled sobbing, until the prioress, with the frown almost vanished from her face, said:

"Daughter, you have acted wrongly, but we are human; let me see the little creature closer," and when they brought the cage, put out a plump white finger, and allowed the bird to peck at it, so naturally, it seemed as if instead of a grave nun of high position, she was a simple woman in the world.

Unwittingly she had exposed herself to the dread influence of sympathy, and as she stood a moment unde-



*Sor Candida and the Bird*

cided, one of the sisters seized the hand which hung down by her side, and kissed it, whilst the others, crowding about her, all found voice to beg for the retention of the little bird, which seated on its perch seemed to survey them critically, an attitude which it is not impossible is frequent in animals towards men. The prioress, after a moment or two's silence, drew herself up and gave her dictum:

"Daughters, our good provincial comes tomorrow on a visit of inspection, and I will tell him what has occurred, and as he settles, so it shall be done." As she stopped speaking, the angelus called the nuns into the choir, and trooping out, they took their places in their stalls.

Next morning brought the provincial, who, in a shaky cab, drove to the door, looking incongruous, just as a nun looks out of place when travelling in a train. Had he but ambled to the door upon a mule, all would have been in keeping except the canvas sand-shoes which he wore in lieu of sandals, perhaps out of a half-felt spirit of homage to external progress, content to pass as a reformer to the outward eye, so that he kept the inward vision well obscured with the theology which he had learned in youth, or maybe for his corns.

Withal an able man, and active in the business of the order, untiring in all things pertaining to the welfare of the province over which he ruled. Well educated, but not intellectual, for "*quod natura non dat, Salamanca non præstat*," he yet had that dry humour, so common through-

### *Sor Candida and the Bird*

out Spain, together with a democratic freedom in address, unknown in northern countries, and which perhaps the Arabs left as a memorial of their sway.

When he had had his chocolate, and gone minutely into all the details of the convent with the prioress, and when the sweets, for which the nuns were famous, the hard quince cheese and sweet-potatoes swimming in syrup thick as honey, with the turrón from Alicante, and the white cakes with caraways incrusting on the paste, were set upon the table, seated in a high-backed chair, the seat, of leather deeply stamped, held to the framework by brass-headed, hand-made nails, he took up his parable:

"How go our daughters in the Lord? Nuns, as your blessed foundress said, are ill to rule, and I, to whom it is appointed to govern and inspect, know that they sometimes prove as difficult to manage as a flock of sheep. I speak under due licence and with pardon, for we should not compare a Christian to a beast."

Then, drawing out his snuffbox, he tapped it in a contemplative way and took a pinch, brushing the residue from off his nostrils with a brown, hairy hand.

The prioress, who saw her opportunity, smiled and said:

"Surely your paternity does not imagine that I guide a flock after the fashion that a muleteer drives mules by shouting 'Arré' at them and by throwing stones?"

He laughed and said the answer was as full of grace as is an egg of meat, and after he had blown his nose with a

*Sor Candida and the Bird*

not overclean red cotton handkerchief, the prioress placed before him the difficulty that had arisen, and asked advice whether the bird might be retained, and, if it were retained, was it not likely it would prove a stumbling-block, turning the minds of those who ought to think on spiritual things to the mere matters of the world?

Taking a piece of sweet-potato on the end of his broad-pointed knife, the provincial conveyed it dexterously into his mouth, and swallowing it with a sound as when a duck plunges his beak below the water of a pond to eat a weed, and having wiped his mouth upon the tablecloth, for a moment closed his eyes, and then began to give his dictum on the case.

"Most of the trouble that we have in life," he said, "is due to human nature, which we can modify and alter, just as we can convey the water from a spring in a lead pipe into a house, so that the pressure be great enough to make it rise."

"Ah," the prioress cut in, "it is then pressure that makes the water rise. I never understood it, or how it was the water came into a house simply by laying down a pipe. . . . Wonderful, indeed, are the Almighty's ways; but there are other things, and how a key turns in a lock, and why the water rises in a pump, I cannot understand . . . but life is full of mysteries that no one can explain."

"Mother," the visitor rejoined, "the mind of woman is not made for science; there are mysteries which it is best that

*Sor Candida and the Bird*

only men should pry into; believe me, peaches lose their bloom by being rubbed, even with a silk handkerchief. Faith is your province, and the things that you have mentioned you had better take on trust, knowing that those, competent by their sex and education to deal with problems such as these, have solved them once for all. What says S. Chrysostom, 'Mens feminæ non est . . . ,' but why quote Latin? and besides, we stray far from our text. I have been thinking as I spoke, on this thing and on that, and as I said, nature cannot be stifled, and it may be that it is not entirely without some great design that Providence has thus permitted this little creature of His own creating to have come into your lives. I would not that the sisters set their affections too much on the bird; but it may serve perhaps to show them resignation to the conventual life, being as it were itself an inmate of a cell, within a cell. So, for the present it can remain, and I will ask our Vicar-General when I see him, if I have acted well."

The prioress thanked him, and said she would convey what he had said to Sister Candida and to the other nuns, and he, having taken leave, got back into his cab, and disappeared down the steep, stony street, the driver cracking his whip noisily as he sat with a rein in either hand, chewing the burnt-out stump of a cigar.

The rescued bird little by little grew in favour with the nuns, who all declared to hear him sing was next to listening to the celestial choirs. Even the prioress brought him

*Sor Candida and the Bird*

some sugar now and then, and smiled good-naturedly upon Sor Candida when she launched out into his praise. Occasionally, so much he waxed in favour and in grace, his cage was taken into church, and as the organ pealed he twitteringly sang his little pæan to the Lord, making the nuns rejoice.

A year passed by, and once again the short, but fierce Castilian summer heated the rocks of Avila, making the lichens and the mosses, with which the winter rains had clothed them, here and there shrivel like leather, left out in the sun. Once more the parameras turned as brown as is the Sáhara, and round the wells once more the expectant cattle waited for evening with their heads hanging to the ground. The convent once again threw a cool shadow on the street, and on the distant mountains of the Gredos only faint lines of snow remained that looked like veins of quartz or marble, seen in the clear white light. The heat continued into autumn, till the great day when Avila turns out to honour her who, born a simple gentlewoman, died the most human of the saints.

The convent was astir, and all the nuns from early dawn were running up and down, decking the church with flowers. Even the prioress abated somewhat of her dignity, and as she mopped her face and drank repeatedly from the white porous bottle from Andujar, hung up in the draught to keep the water cool, said she had never seen the blessed foundress' day so stifling, and that she understood how

*Sor Candida and the Bird*

much the Blessed Mother, born in cool Avila, had suffered in her journeys to the south. Services followed fast on one another, and, high mass over, the nuns all crowded to the windows to see the image of the saint borne in procession through the streets. Aloft upon men's shoulders, and swaying to and fro as they with difficulty passed through the crowded streets, the saint appeared, her halo round her head, and in her hand one of her books, the other stretched in attitude of benediction to the crowd.

All the old palaces were crowded to the roofs. On all the balconies women with flowers in their coarse black hair leaned on each other's shoulders, and in the blazing sun, the men and boys, their sleek and close-cropped heads impervious to the heat, stood and admired, taking their cigarettes out of their mouths just as the saint drew level with them, and replacing them at once as she passed on, the bearers holding theirs unlit between their fingers stained with tobacco juice. From the adjoining country tall and sinewy men, clad in short jackets and in knee-breeches, stood holding their stiff felt hats, their heads bound round with handkerchiefs, which they wore turbanwise with the ends dangling underneath. Their wives and daughters, dressed in short bell-shaped skirts, puffed out with many-coloured flannel petticoats, had handkerchiefs crossed on their breasts, and their hair plaited into tails. As the procession passed they crossed themselves and fell upon their knees.



### *Sor Candida and the Bird*

It took its way down tortuous cobbled streets, past mediæval houses with their coat of arms speaking of when the mystic city deserved its name of "Avila of the Knights," by little plazas in which acacias grew, by the cathedral door, half fortress and half church, whose battlemented walls contrast so strangely with its belfry and its bells, until it reached the gate, where it came out upon the road to San José, the first foundation of the saint. All day the cannon roared, and in the churches services succeeded services, and Avila, for once, woke up in its desire to honour her who has made it known to all the world.

Inside the convent, when at last the services were done, and as the nuns sat talking in the refectory after their evening meal, the door was opened, and Sor Candida appeared, pale and with staring eyes, and in response to their inquiries exclaimed the "sin against the Holy Ghost," and rushed back to her cell. The nuns sat horrified, and the prioress, taking some holy water and a taper as arms against the evil one, who, she averred, must suddenly have fallen upon Sor Candida, went, amongst exclamations from the sisterhood of horror and alarm, to see what had occurred.

She paused before the door and, looking in, saw kneeling on the floor Sor Candida, sobbing and calling down the curses of the Lord upon her head. Before her on a chair was set the little cage, where once the rescued bird had sat upon his perch, and had poured forth the melodies which, as the nuns averred, were praises to the Lord.

### *Sor Candida and the Bird*

The cage was there, a lump of sugar and a piece of ground-sel, dried brown with heat, were sticking in its bars. The earthen water-vessel was upset and dry, and in the bottom lay a little bundle of dishevelled feathers, out of which stuck a head with glassy eyes and beak wide open, showing that the poor occupant of the cane cell had died of thirst; but rescued, as it seemed, to taste once more the bitterness of death, by an inexorable fate.

Tears blurred the eyes of the good-natured prioress. Twice she essayed to speak, and then Sor Candida, rising from her knees, looked at her wildly and exclaimed: "This is the sin against the Holy Ghost I have committed.

"Whilst I prayed in the church and sat and watched our saint borne through her town in triumph, this little one of God lay choking in the heat.

"How could the saint forget? It would have cost her nothing to have put a thought into my mind.

"This punishment perhaps has come upon me as a warning that we nuns should not attach ourselves to any one but Christ."

She sank again upon her knees, and the poor prioress, having again essayed to speak without avail, stood playing nervously with the *María* of her rosary.

## *An Idealist*

THE comrade who had lectured having sat down amidst applause, the chairman asked for questions on the speech. In the long narrow hall the audience sat like sardines in a box, so thickly packed that they had hardly room to shout. The greater part were workmen, but workmen of the London type, sallow and slight and dressed in cheap slop clothes. Some foreigners gave colour to the gathering, and showed up curiously against a sprinkling of middle-class inquirers after truth. The latter, mostly, were callow-looking, earnest young men from various provincial universities, dressed in grey flannel suits with green or yellow neckties, their fluffy hair looking as if it never had been brushed, and their long scraggy throats so thin, one wondered they contained the enormous Adam's apple which protruded over the low-cut collar of their shirts. One or two ladies, chiefly dressed in stuffs from Liberty's, sat half-constrainedly, and jotted down either impressions of the scene or notes of the more salient portions of the lecturer's remarks. Three or four comrades, of the kind whose daily life is Socialism, that is of course talking about it, and laying off what the world will be like at its glad advent, sat in front places, and now and then during the progress of the lecture

had interjected an " 'Ear, 'ear" or "Let 'em 'ave it," meaning of course the Bourgeois, who certainly that evening must have trembled in his shoes, to hear his vices publicly unveiled. They had a kind of likeness to the men who in the Quartier Latin remain art-students all their lives, wearing wide peg-top trousers, flat-brimmed hats, and flapping neck-ties of black crêpe de Chine, and who in cafés spout continually of art, and in their way are comrades, thinking that everlasting talk is the best way to paint a picture or to revolutionize the world. In front at a deal table sat one or two reporters, dull and uninterested, to whom all creeds and faiths were equal, and any kind of lecture or of speech, so many hours of tedious work, which they, bound to work out their purgatory here on earth, lived by reporting at so much the column or the thousand words.

Over the hall there hung that odour of hot people, and stale scent, mixed with the fumes of coarse tobacco in the clothes, which is the true particular flavour of all meetings, Tory and Socialist alike, just as in times gone by extract of orange peel and sawdust marked a circus, or as in Catholic countries incense tones down the various smells which rise from off the faithful in a church.

No one responding to the chairman's call, he just had risen up to thank "our comrade for his eloquent, well thought out and delivered lecture, which all who 'eard it must allow was miles a'ead of all the frothy utterances of members of the two parties of boss frauds between 'oom lay-

bour 'angs, as 'e might say upon the cross, the Liberals and Tories, 'ypocrites and Pharisees . . . if ever there was 'um-bugs . . ." when a man arose and said: "Excuse me, Mr. Chayrman, I 'aven't got a question, but seeing you was arsting for one, I'd like to say a word."

Boys seated in the gallery, to whom according to their philosophic state of boydom all meetings and all speeches simply were chances for diversion, shouted out: "'Ear, 'ear, I saay let Betterton 'ave 'arf a mo'."

The chairman half-constrainedly resumed his seat, baulked like a fiery horse at yeomanry manœuvres, in full career, and toying with the water-bottle, on which great drops of moisture hung condensed, called upon Comrade Betterton, with a request he would be brief. A little withered-looking man of about seventy stood up, yellow in colour as old parchment, and with some still remaining wisps of yellowish, grey hair hanging about his head, like seaweed on a rock. His clothes were rusty black, and neatly brushed, his faded eyes of porcelain blue were set in rims of red, his knees were shaky, and his whole being was pervaded by an air of great benevolence. Clearing his throat and looking round the hall with the assurance of a practised speaker, he broke into a breathless sentence, fluent, unpunctuated, and evidently well known to the admiring boys, who cheered him to the fray.

"I've 'eard the speech," he said, "of the comrade who has addressed us at some length, I've heard and think it 'um-

### *An Idealist*

bug. As Shakespeare says, whilst the grass grows, the 'orse is starving." At this quotation a boy yelled: "Why the 'ell don't he eat it then?" The ladies coloured, fearing the social revolution had actually begun, and from the chairman came the hope that the audience would keep to parliamentary language "seein' that there was lydies in the 'all." Then having called upon our comrade to resume and not to take up too much time, and order being once again established, Betterton took up his interrupted speech, just as a phonograph, cut off, begins again exactly at the place where it was stopped. "What do I find? Nothing but all the means of livelihood monopolized, means of production in the 'ands of one set, land in the other, even the raw material all taken up by the capitalists. Things I say, comrades, is gettin' daily worse, nothin' being left on which a man can exercise his lybour, without a tax to pay to somebody for doin' it. What is a man to do? Sometimes I think, all I can do is to go out and throw a bomb of dynamite involvin' in the sayme destruction all the bloodsuckin' sweaters and land monopolists alike . . ." What more the speaker might have said, Providence only and the boys seated in the gallery knew, for a voice emanating from the body of the hall was heard to say in a sarcastic tone, "Why don't you go and throw it?" and in the shouts of laughter that ensued, the speaker discomfited, but still benevolent for all his fiery words, subsided in his seat, and with the usual compliments and the collection, without which no meeting, Socialist, Anarchist, Liberal, re-



ligious or Conservative, can ever end, the hall was emptied in a trice, the audience passing swiftly, with their eyes fixed on vacancy, before the comrades who at the door sat selling "literatoor."

This was the first occasion that Betterton revealed himself to my unworthy eyes. As time went on I knew him better, and became so to speak one of his intimates, for there are many kinds of intimates, besides the sort you eat and drink with and stand with in the club windows, to criticize the ladies' ankles as they pass. In the first place, he lived on bread and milk, thinking it wrong to take the life of anything (except of course a Bourgeois), so that the pleasures of the table were not exactly in his way.

The work of his profession, that of billsticker, took him far from my haunts, and caused him now and then some qualms of conscience, as when he had to cover hoardings with the announcements of some stuff or other which he knew was made by sweated work. An atheist by choice and by conviction, he yet had texts of Scripture always in his mouth, and used to say: "Only I know, you see, the labourer is worthy of his 'ire, or now and then I should just chuck it, it 'urts me to be covering up an 'oarding with a great picture of some 'arlot, for the advertisement of some bloodsucker's soap. An' badly drawn too, bad art" (for he was great on art) "and sweated stuff, not that I've anything to say against a 'arlot in herself, the most of them is driven to it by the rich."

As to why this should be, or how, he did not condescend to explanation, but still believed it firmly, holding as the chief axiom of his faith the wickedness of peers, who he apparently considered had as much power, for evil, as the French aristocracy before the Revolution, or as Beelzebub. But notwithstanding poverty and the whole hive of bees he carried in his bonnet, his life was happy and his faith so great it might have moved the House of Commons from its foundations in the mud, could he have found a lever ready to his hand. As it was, at his lodgings in a slum in Drury Lane, he used to issue broadsheets, printed and set up by himself, on yellow packing paper. The one on which he prided himself most was headed "Messalina," under which style and title he typified the Queen.

"Pause, brutal and licentious old queen," it opened, "and think, if you have time to think, in the wild orgies of your bestial career." It finished with an adjuration to the proletariat to unite, and the last line was "Blood, Blood, Blood, Heads off, Freedom and Liberty for all."

No larger than a sheet of notepaper, the little periodical was stuffed, so he averred, as full of facts as an egg is with meat, and naturally was never paid for, but placed by him upon his daily round in letter-boxes of houses of the rich. One of his pleasures (and they were few and innocent enough) was to depict the feelings of the lord into whose letter-box he had deposited his squib. "When he sits after dinner, drinking his port wine, with his boots off before the

fire, it will go through him like a small-tooth comb, and maybe maybe 'im tremble, perhaps touch up his 'eart—who knows?—sometimes those kind of chaps is not all bad, only they eats and drinks too much, and 'as no time to think."

Not a dull day could Comrade Betterton remember in his whole life.

"Talk of the Greeks and Romans," he used to say, "of course the Romans mostly was bourgewaw, like ourselves, but the Greeks certainly 'ad opportunities. I mean in art and such-like, and seeing people go about without their clothes, thus gettin' rid of all 'ypocrisy and that, but then as to an ideal for hewmanity, they was deficient. All art was for a class. Now we live in a glorious time, I wouldn't 'a' missed it for a lot. But, as to art, exceptin' poor old Morris, most o' your painters and litteratoors and such is middle-class in their ideas, thinks that their kind of stuff is only for the cultivated classes . . . and see your cultivated class, always at races and shootin' pheasants . . . care as much about the arts as dockers down in Canning Town. What I mean is, a man like me 'as 'is ideal nowadays, and can look forward to a time, when all them Bastilles is pulled down . . . it's figuratively I use the word. You needn't laurf. . . . It does a man's 'eart good to look forward to a time when all your middle-class ideals shall be swept away, and mankind let alone, to grow up beautiful, 'ealthy, artistic, and as unmoral as the Greeks. That 'ere morality has been the

curse of men of my class, making 'em 'ypocrites and driving 'em to drink."

So he went on bill-sticking for his daily bread and moralizing always, both in and out of season, and testifying to his faith, with all the unction of a martyr at the stake, as once, when at a public meeting, packed to the ceiling with religious folk, someone averred he spoke "as he hoped in the spirit of my master, Christ," Betterton, rising from his seat, remarked, "'E ain't my master, Sir."

Benevolent and yet ridiculous, kindly, half mad, and shrewd in all his speculations upon life, on things, on motives, and on men, most likely years ago his bills are covered over an inch thick with others, his pot of paste turned mouldy, his brushes worn down to the wood, and he himself safely enfeoffed in the possession of the inheritance to which he had been born, a pauper's funeral, and grave.

Still, when I sometimes look on his life's work in literature, the pamphlet *Messalina*, in which poor Queen Victoria is both so roundly and unjustly vilified, and think upon the pleasure that no doubt the writer had in its production in his one stuffy room in Drury Lane, it is not always easy to be sure, if one should laugh or cry.

## *In Christmas Week*

THE roar of London slackened, and those pterodactyls of the streets, the motor-omnibuses, seemed to disport themselves like great Behemoth or Leviathan, reducing their creators to an inferior place, as if they lived upon the sufferance of the great whirring beasts.

The white-faced, hurrying, furtive-looking crowds, which throng the pavements for the most part of the year, had given place to multitudes of comfortable folk on shopping bent, who walked less warily than the work-driven slaves, who move about the streets seeming as if they felt that everybody's hand was armed against them, and that to halt a moment in the race exposed them to its blow. A biting frost clad hydrants in steel mail where water dropped from them, and spread white blotches on the wooden pavement at which the cab-horses, inured to petrol patches on the stones, to mud, even to blood after an accident, to paper blowing in their eyes, and all the myriad night noises of the town, shied as at something menacing, so far away had Nature gone out of their lives, as if no vision of green fields in which they played and raced beside their mothers, so stiltily upon their giraffe-looking legs, ever returned to haunt their labour-deadened brains.

## *In Christmas Week*

The electric light shone blue against the trunks of trees, and the sharp cold almost dispelled the scent of horse-dung which perfumes the air of London, as if to nullify all our attempts to set a bar between ourselves and other animals, and bring us face to face with their and our common necessities and origin, laughing at the refinements of material progress, and showing us that the one way by which we can escape the horrors of the world, lies through the portals of the mind.

Peace upon earth, goodwill towards all mankind, was the stock phrase in every church, as if to make the bitterness of life outside more manifest, reducing as it did the preachers' words to a mere froth of wormwood on the air, or at the most a counsel of perfection, towards which it was not worth one's while to struggle, seeing it set so far out of our reach.

Holiday-making crowds filled Piccadilly, which looked quite unfamiliar without its strings of crawling cabs and prostitutes plying for hire upon its stones, as eventide drew near. One felt a sort of truce of God was in the air, and that the Stock Exchange, the sweating den, and the gigantic manufactory, in which a thousand toiled to make vast sums for some uninteresting and quite unnecessary man, were quiet, and that perhaps even the wretched negro in the india-rubber bush might have a day of rest.

The parks, under their canopy of white, turned fields again, and as the dusk came on, the sound of church bells



in the air gave a false feeling of security, though one was well aware no tiger-haunted jungle held half the perils of the vast stucco solitude, in which we pass our lives. Day followed day, cold, miserable, and cheerless, and the town, left deserted by the myriads who make it look like some vast anthill, on which the ants all strive against each other, instead of helping one another after the fashion of their semi-reasonable prototypes, set one a-thinking on the Eastern legend, framed in a warm and sunny land, and therefore quite unfit for the chill north, which was the cause of such a change in life.

The frosty stars shone out, so cold and clear, they seemed but the reflections of some world extinct, which had preserved its light, but with the heat evaporated. The moon was more congenial to our northern blood, pale, passionless, and with an air of infinite yearning after something unexpressed, whilst the full yellow beam of light from Jupiter recalled one to the plains, where in far Nabotha the three kings sat gazing on the stars—a kingly occupation, and one which nowadays all their descendants have allowed to fall into disuse. Perhaps unwisely, for if they followed it, who knows if some particular, bright star might yet arise on their horizon to guide them upwards out of the realms of self?

It may be too that all of us are kings born blind, and that the guiding star is shining brightly in the sky, whilst we sit sightless, with our dim orbits fixed upon the mud. Or it

## *In Christmas Week*

may chance that motor-cars, arriving at the stable where the lowly Saviour babe was laid, would have affrighted all the humble company assembled to adore. The gulf that yawns between the millionaire and the poor man is wider far than that between the watchers by the ass and oxen's stall, and the three sheikhs, who lighted down from off their horses to reverence the babe.

Nor was the gulf between the sheikhs and the animals stabled so snugly, with their warm breath making an aureole about the sleeping baby's head, so deep as that which yawns between the modern dweller in our stucco Babylon, and his selected breeds of animals rendered so bestial by improvement as scarce to move the pity of their owners for all their various pains.

In that old cosmos, with its simple, reasonable life, so like the life of plants and trees, as fixed and as immutable as are the seasons or the tides, there was a sympathy, unthought of, but all the same at hand, which though it did not spend itself in theories, redeemed mankind from many of its sins. Justice, one hears, is but of modern growth; but in its action on the lives of men it toils a thousand leagues behind the old brutality which, though it certainly denied all rights, admitted kinship, or at least was conscious of a link between all sentient things, just as some deity who had created man in his own image might feel ashamed when called upon to punish and destroy beings so like himself, though for all that he could not hold his hand.

### *In Christmas Week*

So in the Christmas week, with its fierce cold and misery to thousands mocked by false protestations of the brotherhood of man, and pinched with hunger in the midst of wealth, it must have seemed that all the legend was but another of the corpse-candles lighted to set them running after its thin flame.

Then came a thaw, and all the iron-bound streets became Sloughs of Despond, in which a million horses, turned to machines, chained in their stables, and taken out, but to pound ceaselessly upon the cruel stones till it was time to be led back again and chained up for the night, toiled wretchedly, not comprehending that they were agents in the progress of the world. Still all the time the church bells pealed, and all the time the planets shone out soft and mellow, making one think involuntarily upon some old bright world which perhaps never has existed save in dreams, but which we now and then have to imagine for ourselves or else go mad at seeing ugliness revered as beauty, and wealth adored as wisdom, with all the meanest qualities of man enthroned as virtues, like a tin sky-sign setting forth some trash with its full-bodied lies. Frost, silence, traffic, all was the same to the vast vulgar town, the hugest monument of Philistinism that the world has seen, or ever will behold.

The blackened muddy snow, reminding one of something pure, defiled, then scorned and cast upon the mire, lay piled in heaps in the chief squares, left there by accident or by design, as if to give the magnates in their shapeless

### *In Christmas Week*

palaces the mumps, and render them as hideous as the great cubes of masonry in which they lived. Misery seemed to reign triumphant in the wilderness of bricks, where dulness strove with smug hypocrisy to make life unendurable, whilst slowly the great city seemed to take up its usual course as the drear week drew out. Ladies in motor-cars, with the hard, uninviting air that wealth imparts so often even to youth and beauty, flitted about, scattering the mud on those whose toil paid for each article of dress they wore, as if they had conferred a favour on the world by deigning to exist. The chill and penetrating damp which rises from the London clay after a thaw, and makes its way into the bones and soul, to them was but another stimulus to life, and aid to appetite. Neither the look of wretchedness of men or animals seemed to say anything to them, although no doubt their minds were all alive with charitable schemes; for never in the history of the human race has charity, that most unhumanizing virtue which has ever made mankind think itself better than its fellows, walked in our midst so blatantly, or justice hid itself more timidly, than at the present day.

Boys, cold and pinched, with voices rendered harsh by all the gin their parents had imbibed, ran shouting out the names of newspapers, flourishing broadsheets on which the headings told of murders, adulteries, cheating and robbery; and smug-faced citizens and prurient-minded girls, their pink-and-white complexions strangely at variance with the

### *In Christmas Week*

twinkle in their eyes, eagerly stopped and bought them, jostling the men as if by accident, pleased at the contact with them as they passed, and yet taking offence at once if but a word was said, saving their conscience in the national way, which finds all things permissible if but due silence is preserved.

So dull and strenuous was the life that it appeared impossible in other lands the sun was shining, and that the brown-faced men and merry black-haired women had time to love and be beloved.

That nothing might be wanting to set forth all aspects of our pomp and state, in a small, narrow street well strewn with offal from the stalls of costermongers' barrows, under the flaming light of naphtha lamps, a line of men stood waiting at the door of a soup-kitchen at which some charitable soul or council had provided refreshment for the body—that body which, we know, matters so little in a transitory life.

The mud had eaten holes into their clothes, and their pinched faces under the electric light, drink-swollen and blotched, looked corpse-like as they stood shivering in the snow, which, falling down like feathers on their hats, gave them a look as if they had been supers at the pantomime of life, and at some signal from the wing, would break into a dance.

The stream of passers-by watched them unmoved, thinking no doubt that idleness or drink had brought them to

*In Christmas Week*

their present situation; and as they waited for their turn some coughed and others scratched themselves, or muttering it was "'ellish cold" shuffled and stamped, as the snow melted on their hair and filtered through their rags.

On every side the current of the world flowed past them, leaving them stranded on the mud, with the safe shores of progress and of wealth slipping away from them, as a spent swimmer, struggling for his life, watches the banks of a swift-running stream race past before his eyes.

Sometimes the line of men swayed like a wounded snake upon the road as one of them passed through the door, and as the others waited for their turn one muttered to a chum: "Blime me, cheer up! it'll be better under Socialism," and spat upon the stones.



*From*  
HOPE  
*1910*



## *Un Monsieur*

**I**T may be the desire for sympathy that makes us yearn to pour our troubles into another's ear—how wise was the first Pope who hit upon auricular confession and made it sacred—that impelled Elise to tell the tale.

"He was," she said, "un Monsieur, about fifty years of age, rich, dull, and only wanting wings to fly, so much he was puffed up with his position in the world and with his wealth.

"No, he did not treat me badly for some time, that is to say, after the visits that he used to pay me, he generally put a ten-pound note upon the mantelpiece and got into his motor with an air as of a Jupiter who had just parted from a Danaë. After he went I usually took a bath, and then sat down to read Heredia or Verlaine, some author or another of a kind that took me off into a world shut to such men as was my wealthy friend.

"He did not talk much; you see he was an Englishman, and seemed as if he was ashamed of speaking much to me, although of course that did not stop his visits to my house. I fancy that he regulated them on hygienic grounds, and rather thought he was a virtuous man in not allowing a full rein to what I feel assured he called the baser appetites

## *Un Monsieur*

. . . baser, eh? . . . the only ones he knew. He looked upon me, I am well aware, but as an instrument of pleasure, a sort of musical-box which he could set in motion with a ten-pound note.

“Upon my side I thought of him but as un Monsieur, a man, that is, who, neither good nor bad, yet pushed by sensuality came to me at his stated intervals and went away appeased. His kisses bothered me, and all his efforts of what he perhaps called love were of a *maladroit*, that used to make me laugh . . . but then, in my profession, one gets to know what to expect of men.

“Of course he was quite unintellectual. The arts of every nature . . . love is an art”—and here she smiled and fluffed her hair out at the sides with conscious pride—“were but so many pastimes served up to him by men who lived by them. They all appeared to him a sort of intellectual ‘*saltimbanques*,’ I verily believe, and he must surely have referred to them as painters, poets, fiddlers, and all that kind of thing.”

She paused, and the light falling on her fair wavy hair and on her well-kept hands gave her an air of such refinement that it was hard to think of her as the wage-slave of such a man as she had just described. Tall, slight, and well proportioned, blessed with the taste that seems the birthright of the women of her race, the little jewellery she wore appeared as much a portion of herself as the faint, half-

professional smile that played about her lips, from the teeth outward, when she was talking to a man.

"You must not think," she said, "that I have laid the colour on too thickly; that would be inartistic. No, he was simply, as I said, *un Monsieur* . . . not to use a vulgar word, which perhaps would have been better in his case.

"Ridiculous, of course—*cocasse*; I am not sure if there is any word in English that quite is the equivalent of that.

"Ludicrous, preposterous, no. . . . I mean he was absurd and had what we call '*une vraie tête de mari*' . . . need I say more than that?

"All fat, rich men of fifty, when they make visits to such girls as me must of necessity be . . . *ah yes*, odd. To me the fact of being rich has something in it of itself that seems preposterous. Fancy how I must feel, who look on love as one of the fine arts, to have to *singer* it with a dull, fat, old man, simply because he has a big account at some bank or another! Apart from morals, to which I make no claim, it is an insult to the God who, I suppose, created both of us."

As she said this she drew herself up to her full height, hollowed her back a little like a gymnast on the horizontal bar, and then went on again.

"I had not seen my Monsieur for a week or two and wondered what had happened to him, when a brougham with a pair of chestnut horses drew up at the door. Out of it got a lady, tall, dark, and with a sable cloak that must have cost

### *Un Monsieur*

an eye out of her head, elegant, svelte, well dressed and . . . beautiful. She did not give her name, but sent a message saying that she would like to see me, and when my maid had showed her up into the room she came forward and addressed me by my name . . . but charmingly, not stiffly in the least, and without any air of patronage. I asked her to be seated, and she sat down as naturally as if she had been on a visit to a woman of her own world, and after looking at me for a moment curiously, said in good French: 'I have come about a business matter.' I did not ask her how she knew my name, but merely smiled at her, with a slight inclination of the head, wondering internally what kind of business could have brought her, and as she paused a little as if she were debating what to say, I ran my eye over her, trying to recollect if I had seen her anywhere, but all to no avail. As we say, I undressed her, mentally, divining, as it were, she wore good stays and linen underneath. Her feet, of course, I saw, and her well-made French shoes and open-work silk stockings, and from her person generally there floated a faint odour of discreet perfume such as a woman of her world, who does not have to make men turn and look at her, can afford to wear.

"She certainly was beautiful and of my type, that is, the type that I admire, with dark and glossy hair in which you might have seen your face as in a looking-glass. All she had on I inwardly commended, her clothes and jewellery, though there was nothing in especial in the latter except a



## *Un Monsieur*

string of pearls, not large, like those in which a banker's wife or rich American, so to speak, hangs in chains, but finely shaped and dazzlingly white. All this review, of course, took but a minute, and as she did not speak a strange suspicion crossed my mind why she had come to see me, but as if she herself had read what thought was passing in my mind she blushed a little, making her look divine, and saying, 'It was on business that I came,' took from her muff a photograph, and holding it towards me asked me if I had ever seen the man.

"To my amazement, on looking at it I saw the man I have been telling you about, in all his commonness. His ears, just like an elephant's, his mottled face, and above all that air of thinking he was somebody only because he happened to be rich, all shouted at me.

"Still, every *métier* has its etiquette, and mine, just like a lawyer's or a priest's, is, or should be, discreet. I did not like the man, and on the other hand the lady was quite charming; but I stood firm, and, after looking at the thing indifferently, answered: 'I never saw the man,' and sat expectantly. A shadow of annoyance crossed the lady's face, and once again she came back to the charge.

"'Are you quite sure?' she said, 'for I am told he is a friend of yours, and let me tell you I am rich.'

"This got my back up just a little, for it appeared as if I never should get clear of riches, and it amazed me, as it annoys me now, to see rich people go about trampling on

honour and on everything by the mere weight of gold. Still, she was far too nice to quarrel with, so I sat quietly and smiled, and happening to catch her eye, we both stopped a half-laugh, and I, divining that she was my Monsieur's wife, wondered what her next move would be to try and make me tell. After a word or two she got up from her chair, and going to the door paused for a minute as she held it in her hand, then, turning to me smiling, said:

"I respect your honesty; but, after all, what does it matter whose money that it is you take? I will pay you anything up to a thousand pounds if you but choose to recollect."

"Once more I thanked her, knowing, of course, that I was acting like a fool, but pleased to show her that I held honour above money—in spite of what I was. As she was going out she turned, and said again: 'Name your conditions'; and when I smiled and shook my head, she looked at me just for a moment, half with regret, half with approval, so that when finally she closed the door I felt, although she had not got her way, that she respected me for having made a stand against my interest.

"Three or four days had passed and the impression of the lady's visit had almost worn away, when who should come to see me but my friend.

"He looked so prosperous, and had so great an air as if the world might have belonged to him had he not been too lazy to write out a cheque . . . an oversight which, no doubt, when he had time enough, he still would rectify . . .

I hardly found it in my heart at first to tell him what had passed. As soon, however, as he began what he perhaps called love-making and tried to draw me on to his knee, I, of course, seeing that he looked on the whole thing but as a hygienic visit, determined not to lose the chance.

"Therefore instead of letting, as I generally did, my head fall on his shoulder, closing my eyes, and thinking I was in the Calais steamer on a rough day, I pushed him off, and standing up, looked at him steadily between the eyes.

"He, for his part, knowing that he was going to pay for my complaisance, and having not an inkling of what was passing in my head, looked at me, half amazed, half puzzled, and exclaimed: 'Elise, old girl, what's up that you behave in this way to a pal?'

"Whether it was his confidence, a confidence that neither God nor Nature had given him the right to exercise with any woman upon earth, or whether I was revolted at my 'sale métier . . . car c'est un vrai métier de chien, tu sais,' I do not understand. When I had my hand free, for he tried to pull me to him and treat my attitude as a good joke, I said without a prelude: 'Your wife was here the other day.'

"He did not think I was in earnest and answered me in French, which he spoke fluently: 'Elle est bonne, celle-là.'

"However, when I had told him how his wife was dressed and named a bracelet that she wore he got more serious. I rather liked to tease him, and for a moment

thought of saying something that would throw doubt upon his wife, but being also curious to find out what had been the real reason of her call, I merely said: 'She took your photograph out of her muff and showed it to me.'

"You never saw a man change quicker than my friend.

" 'What did you say, Elise?' he muttered; and when I told him that I had quite disclaimed all knowledge of him, he took my hand in his and kissed it, exclaiming: 'Elise, you are a splendid girl. . . . My wife wants to divorce me, but we have a child, a girl of ten, old enough to appreciate the disgrace of the Divorce Court, and I would give the world to spare her.'

"For the first time I rather liked him, for he spoke feelingly, and really seemed a man and not a money-bag. He drew me to him, and for the first time in my life I let him do so without repulsion, and holding both my hands he swore I had saved him, that he would do anything in the world for me, and if I wished to lead a different life and go back home to France that he would settle money on me to help me either to learn painting, which had always been my dream, or to get married to a decent man. When I had thanked him and he had kissed me several times, but quite as a man kisses a real woman and not as he had done before upon his visits, he went away, assuring me of his eternal gratitude, and turning at the door, just as his wife had done a day or two ago, to thank me once again. This time I was bouleversée and sat down and cried, thinking

## *Un Monsieur*

what I would do, and came to the conclusion to go to Paris and begin work in some atelier under some painter of repute. I thought of all that I should do and—for the life of art cannot, of course, be quite devoid of love—determined to choose some young painter or another, whom I should live with . . . quite en bourgeois, and darn his socks and be as good to, for I am très bonne fille, as I have told you, as was possible.

“That was a happy afternoon, and my task, when in the evening business sent me out to the Alhambra or some other music-hall, comparatively light. Days passed and weeks, then months, and still my grateful friend was silent, until one day, walking beside the Serpentine, I met him with his wife. He paled, and she looked at me quickly, and clutching at his arm, said: ‘Tiens! C’est elle.’

“I made no sign, but fixed my eyes upon a child sailing his boat and passed on my way. That’s all,” said Elise; “and for the man, at first, I thought he was a lâche and then a scoundrel; but now I know he was but a rich man—‘un Monsieur’—and probably today, if he thinks of the matter now and then, promptly dismisses it, and says as he lights up a big cigar: ‘She was a prostitute.’”





*From*  
CHARITY  
1912



## *Aunt Eleanor*

**T**HERE are no aunts today like my Aunt Eleanor. Either the world is no more fitted for them, or else they are not fitted to the world; but none of them remain.

Scotland and Yorkshire strove together in her blood, making a compound, whimsical and strange, kind and ungracious, foolish and yet endowed with a shrewd common sense, which kept her safe, during the lengthened period of her life, from all the larger follies, whilst still permitting her to give full run to minor eccentricities, both in speech, deed and dress.

Tall, thin, and willowy, and with a skin like parchment, which gave her face, when worked upon by a slight rictus in the nose she suffered from, a look, as of a horse about to kick, she had an air, when you first saw her, almost disquieting, it was so different from anything, or anybody that you had ever met.

She never seemed to age, although no doubt time did not stop the clock for her during the thirty years she was a landmark in my life. Perhaps it was her glossy, dark-brown hair, which, parted in the middle and kept in place by a

### *Aunt Eleanor*

thin band of velvet, never was tinged with grey, not even in extreme old age, that made her ever young.

Perhaps it was her clothes, which for those five-and-thirty years (I cannot swear it was not forty) were invariable, that made her never change.

Her uniform, for so I styled it, it was so steadfast, was, in the winter, a black silk, sprigged, as she would have said herself, with little trees, and in the summer, on fine days, a lilac poplin, which she called "laylock," surmounted by a Rampore Chudda immaculately white.

Her cap was generally adorned with cherry-coloured ribbons. Perched on her head, as if it were a crown, moral and physical, of virginity, it used to have a strange attraction for me when it trembled, now and then, making the ribbons shake, as she reproved a servant, or signified her disapproval of some necessary change. The youngest of a large family, whose members all were cleverer than she, until death set her free by taking off her sisters, she had been held a fool. Not that the imputation ever stopped her for a moment from having her own way; but only laid her open to the comments of the other members of the family, which she accepted, just as a shepherd or a sailor always accepts bad weather, without a murmur, and with a sense as of superiority to fate.

In all her sisters the Scottish strain prevailed. They spoke, not in broad Scots, but with the intonation that sounds like the whine a bagpipe gives when the player, after a pibroch,

## *Aunt Eleanor*

or a lament, allows the bag to empty slowly of the wind. Their mental attitude was that which their stern Scottish faith gave to its votaries. Even in Scotland it is now unknown, leaving the world the poorer by the extinction of a type of mind so much at home with the divinity, that it could venture freely to admonish him if he fell short, in any of his deeds, from the full standard of perfection raised by his worshippers. So did an ancient Scottish lady on being told, during the course of a dispute on "Sabbath recreation," that the Lord walked in the fields and ate the ears of corn, not hesitate to say: "I ken that weel, and dinna think the mair of Him for that, so I'm just tellin' ye."

Aunt Eleanor was of another leaven, for in her composition the Yorkshire blood had overpowered the Scotch. Reared in the lowest section of the English Church, she used to go occasionally into a Methodist or Baptist chapel, alleging that she had no terror of dissent, although it may have been she looked on the adventure as in the light of dissipation, just as an Arab, now and then, might eat a piece of pork, being convinced his faith was steadfast, but wishing, as it were, to taste the wickedness of sin, to make it manifest.

In the same way, her caprice satisfied, Aunt Eleanor returned again to church, but always used to treat the institution as if it were a sort of appanage belonging to the county families. She used to send and ask the clergyman to tell the organist not to pull out the vox humana stop, which

## *Aunt Eleanor*

she alleged made her feel ill, and never to allow his instrument to groan at her as she came into church.

On ritual she was a bar of iron, not liking what she called "highflyers," and stating roundly that for her part she would not mind if the "man" stood up to preach in his shirt-sleeves, as long as they were clean.

These were, as far as I remember, all the religious difficulties Aunt Eleanor had to contend with, for in the practice of her creed she was as upright, kind and charitable a Christian as ever I have met. Not that her faith softened a certain harshness in her mind, that made her singularly harsh to all the failings of her sex in matters sexual.

On those of men, she looked with much more leniency, holding that women always were the tempters, and that no girl had ever gone astray except by her own fault.

Once, and once only, did she almost have the chance to put her doctrine into practice, but then the issue was confused, so that it never was cleared up, whether my aunt was better than her creed, or if she held her Scoto-Yorkshire faith in its entirety. A celebrated lady horse-breaker, of perhaps easy virtue, having come into the street in which she lived, my aunt, to the blank consternation of her friends, prepared to strike up an acquaintanceship, and when remonstrated with, observed: "She may be all you say, my dear, but what a seat she has, and hands like air; she must have learned in a good school, she rides so quietly."

As fortune willed it, the acquaintanceship was never



formed, but had it been, my aunt, I fancy, would have discoursed on snaffles and on curbs, and on that symbol of all equitation, the sacred lipstrap, with as much gusto as she used to do with other of her friends. Strange as it may appear, although a semi-invalid from her birth up, a martyr as she was to violent sick headaches, which in those days were the equivalent of "nerves," she always used to ride.

She and her brother were both born horsemen, riding to hounds, and jealous to a fault. No woman, in my aunt's eyes, could ever ride, that is to say, up to her standard. Either their hands were bad, or else their seats were loose, or if both hands and seats were good, they had no nerve, or as a last resort, rode to attract attention. "You know," she used to say, "Miss Featherstone never was known to jump a fence, unless a man was looking at her. If there was but a butcher's boy she would have risked her neck, although, in that long run, the one I told you of, when we met at the Rising Sun upon Edge Hill, and finished somewhere down in Gloucestershire, she never took a fence, and then came up just as we killed, with several officers, all galloping like tailors on the road."

I hear her now, talking about her celebrated mare, "The Little Wonder," which she declared she never touched with a whip in all her life, but once, and never with the spur. This happened at a fence, at which the mare had swerved; but when she felt the whip, she put her back up and entirely refused. A Frenchman who was following my aunt,

passed her, and took his hat off, saying as he passed: "Thank you for whip' your mare. I have followed you a month, but never pass you till today." My aunt never related this, but tears rose in her eyes: whether at her own cruelty, or at the Frenchman having passed her, I never could make out.

Horses and hunting were the chief themes of conversation with my aunt, and as she did not care the least for anyone's opinion but her own, her talk ran usually into a monologue, in which she set her theories out, as to which rein should go under which finger, and how good hands consisted in the wrist. "It is all done with a turn of the wrist, my dear, and not by butchering," a theory sound in itself and one which many would be wise to follow, if they had aunts as competent as mine to teach them the right way. Years only added to my aunt's eccentricity, and as she lived in times when gentlewomen enjoyed ill-health, no one was much astonished when one day she definitely took to a couch, laid in the drawing-room window, from which she could survey the road and watch the people going to the meet.

For years she lay there, only getting up on Sunday to go to church, which she did, either in a Bath chair, or else in Jackson's fly, for she averred that only Jackson in the whole town of Leamington could drive with decency. The other flymen started with a jerk, or sawed their horses' mouths in a way that set my aunt's nerves tingling, and used to make her open the window and expostulate in a high, quavering key. Even the trusted Jackson had to submit to adverse

criticism now and then, both of his driving and of his horse's legs.

It used to be a curious sight to see the semi-invalid, leaning upon her maid, dressed in her invariable black, sprigged silk gown—she would have fainted to have heard it called a dress—a curtain bonnet on her head, a parasol ringed with small flounces and jointed in the middle, in her hand, walk down the steps of her front door and stand before the fly.

Turning towards her maid, she used to say: "Baker, lend me your arm a moment," and then advancing with the half-valetudinarian, half-sporting air that she affected, open the horse's mouth.

"Well, Jackson," she would say, "you have got a young one there. I think he would make a better hunter than some of those I see trotting down to the meet. They breed them far too long-backed nowadays, not like the well-ribbed-up, short-legged, well-coupled-up ones that I remember when I hunted as a girl with the Fitzwilliam hounds."

Jackson would touch his hat, and answer: "You know a 'orse, Miss, and this one, 'e is a 'orse, he ought by rights to be a gentleman's."

Then with an admonition as to not starting with a jerk, my aunt would get into the fly, Baker having first put in a coonskin cushion with the head on, made in the fashion of a pillow-case.

When my aunt had put her feet into it, arranged her shawl and her belongings carefully about her, just as if she were

### *Aunt Eleanor*

going on a journey in the wilds, the fly rolled off upon its way, with my aunt looking out now and then to criticize the driver and the horse. After having lain upon her couch ten years or so, one day she suddenly got up. The ensuing week she went out hunting, dressed in her long Victorian habit, tall hat and veil, and with a boa round her neck. She hunted on, riding much harder than most members of the hunt, but in a modest and retiring way, and followed by her groom. He, a staid lad, who had been brought up with Lord Fitzwilliam as an under-strapper in the hunt stables, always used to say: "Them as rides with my lady 'as to know 'ow to ride; but then I passed my youth with Lord Fitzwilliam. They was a serious family, all rode to 'ounds, and all of 'em rode blood 'orses, from the old lord down to the little gals."

My aunt continued riding to extreme old age, and then went to the meets driven in a fly, of course, by someone she could put her trust in, though Jackson long had passed away, to drive perhaps in some particular limbo, where the shades of Captain Barclay, old Squire Osbaldiston, and Sir Tatton Sykes drove shadowy chariots, dressed in their "down the road" coats, with a coach and horses on the big pearl buttons, just as they had appeared in life, all with straws in the corners of their mouths, and with that air of supernatural knowledge of the horse which they all had on earth.

My aunt, I fancy, could she have chosen for herself, would

have gone to some heaven, half stable and half country house, with just a sprinkling of Low Church divines flying about in black Geneva gowns and white lawn bands, to give an air of having been redeemed, to the select, but rather scanty, inmates of the place when they sat down to dine.

Poor lady, all her life was one long tutelage, till her last sister died. Then when she had peeped below the blinds to satisfy herself that the hearse horses all were sound, and none wore housings, a thing that she detested, saying she could not bear to see a horse in petticoats, she found herself quite free.

After the fashion of the times, she did not go herself to see her sister buried, but sat at home and read the Burial Service, although a member of the family averred on his return he caught her dozing with the Church Service closed upon her lap, and *Market Harboro'* in her hand. Years passed, and she became a kindly tyrant in her old age, making her young relations happy and terrified by her ungracious kindness to them all.

Lastly, in a Bath chair, she used to have herself dragged up and down the Holly Walk or the Parade, criticizing horses and riders most relentlessly, and now and then making the chairman stop before the shops where pictures were for sale, and after looking at them most intently, usually saying, "'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view," a piece of criticism which she thought final, as applied to art in all its branches, even to photographs.

### *Aunt Eleanor*

She died as she had lived, after arranging her own funeral with the undertaker, and enjoining on him to be sure that the hearse was not started with a jerk, and all his beasts were sound.

He left her presence snorting a little in a bandanna pocket-handkerchief, remarking: "Well, I never saw such a lady in my life, a plucked one to be sure, I'll bet a suvering."

My aunt rests quietly under some elm trees in Old Milverton churchyard.

Many old Scottish ladies lie round about the grave where my aunt sleeps under a granite slab now stained a little with the weather, imparting to the churchyard a familiar air, as of the tea-parties that she once used to give, when they all sat together, just as they now lie closely in the ground, to keep each other warm. The rooks caw overhead, and when the hounds pass on a bright November morning, I hope she hears them, for heaven would be to her but a dull dwelling-place if it contained no horses and no hounds.



## *Aurora La Cujíñi*

**I**SBILIEH, as the Moors called Seville, had never looked more Moorish than on that day in spring. The scent of azahar hung in the air; from patio and from balcony floated the perfume of albahaca and almoraduz, plants brought to Seville by the Moors from Nabotha and from Irak-el-Hind. The city of the royal line of the Beni-Abbad was as if filled with a reminiscence of its past of sensuality and blood. The mountains of the Axarafe loomed in a violet haze, and seemed so near, you felt that you could touch them with your hand. The far-off sierras above Ronda looked jagged, and as if fortified to serve as ramparts against the invasion of the African from his corresponding sierra in the country of the Angera, across the narrow straits. Over the Giralda came the faint, pink tinge which evening imparts, in Seville, to all the still remaining Moorish work, making the finest specimen of the architecture of the Moors in Spain look as delicate and new as when the builder, he who built at Marakesh and Rabat two other towers of similar design, raised it in honour of the one God, and the great camel-driver who stands beside his throne. Down the great river for which the Christians never found a better name than that left by the Moorish dogs, the yellow tide

ran lazily, swaying alike the feluccas with their tall, tapering yards, the white Norwegian fruit schooners, and the sea coffins from the port of London, tramps out of Glasgow, and the steam colliers from the Hartlepoons or Newcastle-on-Tyne. The great cathedral in which lies Ferdinand Columbus, the most southern Gothic building in all Europe, built on the site of the chief mosque said to have been as large as that of Cordoba, rose from the Court of Oranges, silent as a vast tomb, and seemed protected from the town by its raised walk, fenced in with marble pillars and massive iron chains. The Alcázar, and The Tower of Gold, the churches, especially St. John's Beside the Palm, seemed to regret their builders, as, I think, do all the Saracenic buildings throughout Spain. Though ignorant of all the plastic arts, taking their architecture chiefly from the two forms of tent and palm tree, their literature so conceived as to be almost incomprehensible to the peoples of the north, the tribes who came from the Hedjaz, the Yemen, and beyond Hadramut have left their imprint on whatever land they passed. They comprehended that life is first, the chiefest business which man has to do, and so subordinated to it all the rest. Their eyes, their feet, their verse, and their materialistic view of everything have proved indelible wherever they have camped. They and their horses have stamped themselves for ever on the world. Even today, their speech remains embedded, like a mosaic, in the vocabulary of Southern Spain, giving the language strength.

Notable things have passed in Seville since Ojeda, before he sailed for the new-found Indies, ran along the beam fixed at a giddy height in the Giralda and threw a tennis-ball over the weather-vane to show the Catholic kings and the assembled crowd the firmness of his head. Since San Fernando drove out the royal house of the Beni-Abbad, and Motamid, the poet king, took sanctuary in Mequinez, as Abd-el-Wahed notes in his veracious history of the times, much has occurred and has been chronicled in blood. In the Alcázar, Pedro el Justiciero loved María de Padilla; in it he had made the fish-pond where the degenerate Charles the Second sat a-fishing, whilst his empire slipped out of his hands. The Caloró from Hind, Multán, or from whatever trans-Caucasian or cis-Himalayan province they set out from, ages ago, had come, and spreading over Spain, fixed themselves firmly in the part of Seville called the Triana, after the Emperor Trajan who was born there as some say, and where today they chatter Romany, traffic in horses, tell fortunes, and behave as if the world were a great oyster which they could open with their tongues, so wheedling and well hung.

So, on the evening of which I write, a Sunday in the month of May, the bull-fight was just over, leaving behind it that mixed air of sensuousness and blood which seems to hover over Seville after each show of bulls, as it may once have hovered, after a show of gladiators, about Italica in the old Roman days.

### *Aurora La Cujíñi*

The fight was done, and all the tourists, after condemning Spanish barbarism, had taken boxes to a man, and come away delighted with the picturesqueness of the show.

Trumpets had sounded, and the horses, all of which had done more service to mankind than any fifty men, and each of whom had as much right, by every law of logic and anatomy, to have a soul, if souls exist, as had the wisest of philosophers, had suffered martyrdom. Hungry and ragged, they had trodden on their entrails, received their wounds without a groan, without a tear, without a murmur, faithful to the end; had borne their riders out of danger, fallen upon the bloody sand at last with quivering tails, and, biting their poor, parched and bleeding tongues, had died just as the martyrs died at Lyons or in Rome, as dumb and brave as they.

In the arena the light-limbed men, snake-like and glittering in their tinsel clothes, had capered nimbly before the bull, placing their banderillas deftly on his neck.

Waiting until he almost touched them, they placed one foot upon his forehead, and stepping lightly across the horns, had executed what is called "el salto de trascuerno." Then leaping with a pole, they had alighted on the other side of him like thistledown, had dived behind the screen, had caught and held the furious beast an instant by the tail, and after having played a thousand antics, running the gamut, known to the intelligent as "volapie," "galleo,"

"tíjerilla," "veronica," and "chatré," escaped as usual with their lives.

The espada had come forward, mumbled his "boniment" in Andaluz, swung his montera round his shoulder towards the presidential throne, and after sticking his sword, first in the muscles of the neck, from which it sprang into the air, and fell, bloody and twisted, on the sand, taking another from an attendant sprite, butchered his bull at last, mid thunders of applause.

Blood on the sand; the sun reflected back like flame from the white walls; upon the women's faces cascarilla; a fluttering of red and yellow fans; lace veils on glossy hair, looking like new-fallen snow on a black horse's back, all made a picture of the meeting of the east and west to which the water-sellers' voices added, as they called "Agua," in a voice so guttural, it sounded like the screaming of a jay.

A scent of blood and sweat rose from the plaza, and acted like an aphrodisiac on the crowd.

Bold-looking women squeezed each other's hands, and looked ambiguously at one another, as if they were half men. Youths with their hair cut low upon their foreheads, loose, swinging hips, and eyes that met the glance as if they were half girls, pressed one against the other on the seats. Blood, harlotry, sun, gay colours, flowers, and waving palm trees, women with roses stuck behind their ears, mules covered up in harness of red worsted, cigar girls, gipsies,

*Aurora La Cujíñi*

tourists, soldiers, and the little villainous-looking urchins, who, though born old, do duty in the south as children, formed a kaleidoscope. The plaza vomited out the crowd, just as the Roman amphitheatre through its vomitorium expelled its crowd of blood-delighting Roman citizens, "Civis Romanus sum," and all the rest of it.

The stiff, dead horses, all were piled into a cart, their legs sticking out, pathetic and grotesque, between the bars. A cart of sand was emptied on the blood, which lay in blackening pools here and there in the plaza, and then the espada, smoking a cigar, emerged like Agag, delicately, and drove off, the focus of all eyes. Girls swarmed in the streets, sailing along with their incomparable walk unrivalled in the world, and in the Calle de la Passión the women of the life stood against open, but barred, windows, painted and powdered, and with an eye to business as they scanned passing men.

Lovers stood talking from the streets by signs to girls upon the balcony, their mothers' presence hidden behind the curtain in the dark, and the space intervening, keeping their virtue safe.

Sometimes a man leaned up against the grating and whispered to his sweetheart through the bars, holding her hand in his. The passers-by affected not to see them, and either stepped into the street or looked with half-averted eyes, at the first act in life's great comedy.

In the great palm-tree planted square the salmon-coloured



plaster seats were filled with men, who seemed to live there day and night, contributing their quota to the ceaseless national expenditure of talk. On this occasion they discussed, being all "inteligentes," each incident and action of the fight, the old men deprecating modern innovation and sighing for the times and styles of Cuchares, or el Zeño Romero, he who first brought the art of bull-fighting from heaven, as his admirers say. If a girl, rich or poor, a countess from Madrid, or maiden of the Caloró from the Triana, chanced to pass, they criticized her, as a prospective buyer does a horse or as a dealer looks down a slave at Fez. Her eyes, her feet, her air, each detail of her dress, were all passed in review, and if found pleasing, then came the approving, "Blessed be your mother!" with other compliments of a nature to make a singer at a Paris café-concert blush. The recipient took it all as a matter of everyday occurrence, and with a smile or word of thanks, according to her rank, pursued the uneven tenor of her way with heightened colour, and perhaps a little more "meneo" of her hips and swaying of her breasts.

In the Calle Sierpes, the main artery and chief bazaar, roofed with an awning right from end to end, the people swarmed like ants, passing, and then repassing in a stream. Cafés were gorged with clients, all talking of the bull-fight, cursing the Government, or else disputing of the beauty and the nature of the women of their respective towns. The clubs, with windows of plate glass down to the ground,

showed the "haute gomme" lounging in luxury upon their plush-upholstered chairs, stiff in their English clothes, and sweating blood and water in the attempt to look like Englishmen, and to keep up an unconcerned appearance under the public gaze. Girls selling lemonade, horchata, agraz, with the thick, sticky sweetmeats, and the white, flaky pastry flavoured with fennel and angelica, left by the Moors in Spain, went up and down crying their wares, and offering themselves to anyone who wished to venture half a dollar on the chance. The shops were full of all those unconsidered trifles, which in Spain alone can find a market, cheap and abominably nasty, making one think that our manufactories must be kept running with a view to furnish idiots or blind men with things they do not want.

After the gospel comes the sermon; sherry after soup, and when the bloodshed of the day has stirred men's pulses, they drift instinctively towards the dancing-houses, just as a drunkard in the morning turns back again to drink, to give another fillip to the blood. Men streamed to the Burrero, at whose narrow doors sat ancient hags selling stale flowers and cheaply painted match-boxes, pushing and striving in the narrow passage to make their way inside. The temple of the dance was an enormous building, barn-like and dusty, and with its emptiness made manifest by oil-lamps stuck about the walls.

The floor was sanded and in the middle of it, at little

wooden tables, seated on rickety cane chairs, was the fine flower of the rascality of Spain, whilst round the walls stood groups of men, who by their dress might have been Chulos or Chalanés, loafers or horse-copers, all with their hair brushed forward on their foreheads and plastered to the head.

All wore tight trousers moulded to the hips, short and frogged jackets, and all had flat felt hats with a stiff brim, which now and then they ran their fingers round to see if it was straight.

Others were wrapped in tattered cloaks, and mixed with them were herdsmen and some shepherds, with here and there a bull-fighter and here and there a pimp.

In the crank, shaky gallery was a dark box or two, unswept and quite unfurnished, save for a bunch or two of flowers painted upon the plaster, and a poor lithograph of the reigning sovereign, flanking a bull-fighter. One was quite empty, and in the other sat two foreign ladies, come to see life in Seville, who coughed and rubbed their eyes in the blue haze of cigarette smoke, which filled the building, just as the incense purifies a church with its mysterious fumes.

Set in a row across the stage, like flowers in a bed, were six or seven girls. Their faces painted in the fashion of the place, without concealment, just like the ladies whom Velázquez drew, gave them a look of artificiality, which their

cheap boots, all trodden down at the heel, and hair dressed high upon the head, with a comb upon the top and a red flower stuck behind the ear, did little to redeem.

Smoking and pinching one another they sat waiting for their turn, exchanging jokes occasionally with their acquaintances in front, and now and then one or the other of them rising from her chair walked to the looking-glasses placed on each side of the stage, and put her hair in order, patting it gently at the side and shaking out her clothes, just as a bird shakes out its feathers after it rolls itself in dust.

On one side of the stage sat the musicians, two at the guitar and two playing small instruments known as "bandurrias"—a cross between the mandolin and a guitar, played with a piece of quill. The women suddenly began to clap their hands in a strange rhythm, monotonous at first, but which at length, like the beating of a tom-tom, makes the blood boil, quiets the audience, stills conversation, and focusses all eyes upon the stage. The strange accompaniment, with the hands swept across the strings, making a whir as when a turkey drags its wings upon the ground, went on eternally. Then, one broke out into a half-wild song, the interval so strange, the time so wavering, and so mixed up the rhythm, that at first hearing it scarcely seems more pleasing than the howling of a wolf, but bit by bit goes to the soul, stirs up the middle marrow of the bones, and leaves all other music ever afterwards tame and unpalatable.

### *Aurora La Cujíñi*

The singing terminated abruptly, as it seemed, for no set reason, and died away in a prolonged high note, and then a girl stood up, encouraged by her fellows with shouts of "Venga Juana," "Vaya salerosa," and a cross-fire of hats thrown on the stage, and interjections from the audience of "Tu sangre" or "Tu enerpo" and the inspiriting clap of hands, which never ceases till the dancer, exhausted, sinks down upon a chair. Amongst the audience, drinking their manzanilla in little tumblers about the thickness of a piece of sugar-cane, eating their boquerones, ground nuts, and salted olives, the fire of criticism never stopped, as everyone in Seville of the lower classes is a keen critic both of dancing-girls and bulls. Of the elder men, a gipsy, though shouting "Salero!" in a perfunctory manner, seemed discontented, and recalled the prowess of a dancer long since dead, by name Aurora, surnamed La Cujíñi, and gave it as his faith that since her time no girl had ever mastered all the mysteries of the dance. The Caloró, who always muster strong at the Burrero, all were upon his side, and seemed inclined to enforce their arguments with their shears, which, as most of them maintain themselves by clipping mules, they carry in their sash.

Then, just as the discussion seemed about to end in a free fight, a girl stepped out to dance. None had remarked her sitting quietly beside the rest; still, she was slightly different in appearance from all the others in the room, both in her air and dress.

*Aurora La Cujíñi*

A gipsy at first sight, with the full lustrous eyes her people brought from far Multán, dressed in a somewhat older fashion than the rest, her hair brought low upon her forehead and hanging on her shoulders after the style of 1840, her skirt much flounced, low shoes tied round the ankle, a Chinese shawl across her shoulders, and with a look about her, as she walked to the middle of the stage, as of a mare about to kick. A whisper to the first guitar caused him with a smile to break into a tango, his instrument well "requintado," striking the chords with every finger of his hand at the same instant, as the wild Moorish melody jingled and jarred out and quivered in the air.

She stood a moment motionless, her eyes distending slowly and focussing the attention of the audience on her, and then a sort of shiver seemed to run over her, the feet gently began to scrape along the floor, her naked arms moved slowly with her fingers curiously bent, and meant perhaps to indicate by their position the symbols of the oldest of religions, and, as the gipsies say, she drew the heart of every onlooker into her net of love. Twisting her hips till they seemed ready to disjoint, and writhing like a snake, dragging her skirt up on the stage, she drew herself up to her full height, thrust all her body forward, her hands moved faster, and the short sleeves slipped back exhibiting black tufts of hair under her arms, glued to her skin with sweat. Then she wreathed forwards, backwards, looked at



### *Aurora La Cujíñi*

the audience with defiance, took a man's hat from off the stage, placed it upon her head, put both her arms akimbo, swayed to and fro, but still kept writhing as if her veins were full of quicksilver. Little by little the frenzy died away, her eyes grew dimmer, the movements of the body slower, then with a final stamp, and a hoarse guttural cry, she stood a moment quiet, as it is called, "dormida," that is, asleep, looking a very statue of impudicity and lust. The audience sat a moment spellbound, with open mouths like satyrs, and in the box where were the foreign ladies, one had turned pale resting her head upon the other's shoulder, who held her round the waist. Then with a mighty shout, the applause broke forth, hats rained upon the stage, "Oles" and "Vayas" rent the air, and the old gipsy bounded on the table with a shout, "One God, one Cujíñi"; but in the tumult, La Cujíñi had disappeared, gone from the eyes of Caloró and of Busné, Gipsy and Gentile, and the Burrero never saw her more.

Perhaps, at witches' sabbaths she still dances, or perhaps in that strange Limbo where the souls of gipsies and their donkeys dree their weird, she writhes and dislocates her hips in the Romalis, or in the Ole, she drags her skirts on the floor, with a faint rustling sound.

Sometimes the curious may see her still, dancing before a Venta in the blurred outline of a Spanish lithograph, her head thrown back, her hair "en catagón," with one foot

*Aurora La Cujíñi*

pointing to a hat to show her power over, and her contempt for, all the sons of man, just as she did upon that evening when she took a brief and fleeting reincarnation to breathe once more the air of Seville, heavy with perfume of spring flowers, mixed with the scent of blood.

## *A Princess*

**N**OTHING is wilder than the long stretch of sandy coast which runs from the East Neuk of Fife right up to Aberdeen.

Inland, the windswept fields, with their rough walls, without a kindly feal upon the top, as in the west, look grim and uninviting in their well-farmed ugliness.

The trees are low and stunted, and grow, twisted by the prevailing fierce east winds, all to one side, just like the trees so often painted by the Japanese upon a fan.

The fields run down, until they lose themselves in sandy links, clothed with a growth of bent.

After the links, there intervenes a shingly beach, protected here and there by a low reef of rocks, all honey-combed and limpet-ridden, from which streamers of dulse float in the ceaseless surge.

Then comes the sea, grey, sullen, always on the watch to swallow up the fishermen, whose little brown-sailed boats seem to be scudding ceaselessly before the easterly haar towards some harbour's mouth.

Grey towns, with houses roofed with slabs of stone, cluster round little churches built so strongly that they have weathered reformations and the storms of centuries.

## *A Princess*

Grey sky, grey sullen sea, grey rocks, and a keen whistling wind that blows from the North Sea, which seems to turn the very air a steely grey, have given to the land a look of hardness not to be equalled upon earth.

One sees at first sight that in the villages no children could have ever danced upon the green. No outward visible sign of any inward graces can be seen in the hard-featured people, whose flinty-looking cheeks seem to repel the mere idea of kisses, and yet down in whose hearts exists a vein of sentiment for which in other and more favoured lands a man might search in vain. As any district, country, or race of men must have its prototype, its spot or person that sums up and typifies the whole, so does this hard, grey land find its quintessence in the town of Buckiehaven, a windswept fisher village, built on a spit of sand.

Its little church is stumpier than all the other little churches of the coast. Its houses are more angular, their crowsteps steeper, and the gnarled plane trees that have fought for life against its withering blasts, more dwarfish and ill-grown. The fisherfolk seem ruddier, squarer, and more uncouth than are their fellows.

Their little wave-washed harbour looks narrower and still more dangerous than the thousand other little harbours that dot the coast from Kinghorn to St. Forts.

Still in the churchyard in which the graves of mariners, of old sea-captains (who once sailed, drank, and suffered, where their descendants now sail, drink, and suffer), lie

thick, each waiting for the pilot, the headstones looking to the sea, their Mecca, there is an air of rest. The graves all look out seawards, where their hearts lived, and yet most of the denizens returned to lay their bones in the old paroch where in their youth they must have run about, clattering like ponies on the grey causeway stones. Yet there are grave-stones which relate that Andrew Brodie or George Anstruther was buried in the deep and that his monument was raised by Agnes, Janet, or some other sorrowing wife, in the full hope of his salvation, with a text drawn from the minor prophets and unintelligible to any eyes but those of love and faith.

The lettering on the stones is cut so deeply that in that mossless land it looks as fresh as when the widow and the local stonemason stood chaffering for its price, surrounded by her flaxen-headed children, whom in good time the sea would claim, taking them from her as relentlessly as it had claimed her man.

Only a little lichen here and there, yellow and looking like a stain, shows that time and the weather have both wrought their worst and failed to get a hold, so hard the whinstone, and so good the workmanship.

In the low, wiry grass the graves look like a flock of sheep, the rough-built wall keeps them from straying, and the squat cock upon the spire, that creaks so harshly in the wind, looks down upon them and does not crow, because it knows the inmates are asleep.

### *A Princess*

So they sleep on, sleeping a longer watch below than any that they ever had on earth, when the shrill boatswain's whistle roused them at each recurring period of four hours, or a shout called them all on deck to shorten sail.

All round the churchyard wall are old-world tombs, of worthies of the places—Brodies and Griersons, Selkirks and Anstruthers—adorned with emblems of their trades, as mallets, shears, and chisels, with a death's-head and cross-bones crowning all, to show not only that the skeleton had sat unbidden at life's feast, but after a full meal still lingered with his hosts.

The whinstone church, hardly distinguishable from the rocks beside the harbour, in colour and in shape, the little burial-ground more like a sheep-pen than a cemetery, the high-pitched house-roofs in the steep stony staircases of streets, all give the idea of a corner of the world to which no stranger could have penetrated except by accident. If such a one there were, he must have felt himself indeed a foreigner in such an isolated spot.

Yet on the south side of the church, set perhaps by accident to catch the little sun that ever shines upon that drear East Neuk, there is a slab let in, or stuck against the wall.

Upon the granite tablet, edged round with a supposititious Gothic scroll, cut into flowers like pastry ornaments upon a pie, the letters poorly executed, showing up paltry in their shallowness, beside the lettering of the staunch old tombs amongst the grass, is written: "Here lies Sinakalula,



### *A Princess*

Princess of Raratonga, the beloved wife of Andrew Brodie, Mariner."

What were the circumstances of their meeting the stone does not declare, only that the deceased had been a princess in her native land, and had died in the obscure east-country haven, and had been "beloved."

Nothing, but all—at least all that life has to give.

The simple idyll of the princess and Andrew Brodie, mariner, is writ on the red marble slab, in letters less enduring than their love, badly designed and poorly cut, and destined soon to disappear in the cold rains and steely blasts of the East Neuk of Fife, and leave the stone a blank.

How they met, loved, and how the mariner brought home his island bride, perhaps to droop in the cold north, and how he laid her in the drear churchyard to wait the time when they should be united once again in some Elysian field, not unlike Polynesia, with the Tree of Life for palms, the selfsame opal-tinted sea, angels for tropic birds, and the same air of calm pervading all the air, only the mariner, if he still lives, can say.

The princess, as Andrew Brodie first saw her, must have looked like the fair damsels Captain Cook describes, with perhaps just a slight tincture of the missionary school, but not enough to take away her grace.

Dressed in a coloured and diaphanous sacque, a wreath of red hibiscus round her head, her jet-black hair loose on her shoulders, bare arms and feet, and redolent of oil of coco-

nut, she must have seemed a being from another world to the rough mariner.

How he appeared to her is harder to determine, perhaps as did Cortés to La Malinche, or as did Soto to the Indian queen amongst the Seminoles. True, we know what Cortés was like, how he rode like a centaur, was noble, generous, that he knew Latin, as Bernal Díaz says, and Soto was designed by nature to capture every heart. The Scottish sailor possibly appeared as the representative of a strange race, harder and fiercer, but more tender at the heart than her compatriots.

His steel-blue eyes may have appeared to her as hardly mortal; his rough and hairy hands, symbols of strength embodied; his halting speech, a homage to her charms. Then as he must have been an honest and true-hearted man, approaching her with the same reverence with which he would have courted one of the hard-faced, red-headed women of his native place, not in the fashion of the trader or the beach-comber, it must have seemed as if a being, superior by its strength, had thrown its strength aside, all for her love.

When his ship sailed, the sailor may have hidden in the hills, then when her topsails had sunk well beneath the waves, and he was sure the ship would not return, come out of hiding, and strolled timidly along the beach, until some trader or the missionary came out and sheltered him.

Naturally, chiefs and missionaries and all the foreign

population looked on his love as an infatuation; but he, setting to work, trading in copra and bêche-de-mer, in coral and the like, gradually made himself a man of consequence. Schooners would come consigned to him, and cargoes of his own lie heaped in baracoons, thatched with banana leaves.

At last, when he had "gathered siller" and become a man of substance—for Brodie certainly was one of those who could not stoop to live upon his wife—he must have gone and seen the missionary. One sees him sweating in his long-shore togs, a palm-tree hat upon his head, toiling along the beach, and rapping at the door. The missionary, most likely a compatriot, bids him come in, and lays the "Word," which he has been translating into Polynesian, upon the table and welcomes him.

"I'm glad to see ye, Andrew. How time goes on. Now you're a man of substance, and will be sending for a wife . . . unless, indeed, you might think of Miss McKendrick, the new Bible-reader. A nice-like lass enough. No bonny, but then beauty, ye ken, is not enduring. . . . What, ye dinna say? I thocht ye had been cured o' all that foolishness. They island girls are a' like children. What sort of looking wife would she be to ye at hame, man Andrew?"

This may have passed, and then the wedding in the mission church, with the dusky catechumens looking stiff and angular in the death-dealing clothes of Christianity, the bride listening to the old-fashioned Scottish exhortation on

## *A Princess*

the duties of her new estate, what time the chief, her father, a converted pagan, thought with regret of the marriage ceremonies that he had witnessed in his youth, so different from these.

It may have been that for a year or two the ill-assorted pair lived happily, the husband trading and watching his men work in his garden, whilst his wife swung in a hammock underneath a tree. As time went by the recollection of the grey village in East Fife would come back to the husband's mind and draw him northwards, whilst the wife wondered what it was he thought about, and why the steely eyes seemed to look through her as if they sought for something that she could never see.

At last would come the day when he first spoke of going home, timidly, and as if feeling somehow he was about to commit a crime. Her tears and expostulations can be imagined, and then her Ruth-like resolution to follow him across the sea.

The voyage and the first touch of cold, the arrival in the bare and stormy land, the disappointment of poor Andrew, when he found he was forgotten by the great part of his friends, and that the rest despised him for having brought a coloured woman home, all follow naturally.

All the small jealousies and miseries of a provincial town, the horrors of the Scottish Sabbath, the ceaseless rain, the biting wind, the gloom and darkness of the winter, the disappointment of the brief northern summer, the sea, in which

none but a walrus or a seal could bathe, must have done their worst upon the island princess, now become in very truth the wife of Andrew Brodie, mariner. One sees her in her unbecoming European clothes, simple and yet accustomed to respect, exposed to all the harshness of a land in which, though hearts are warm, they move so far beneath the surface that their pulsations hardly can be felt, except by those accustomed to their beat.

Then in the end consumption, that consumption that usually attacks a monkey when it passes north of forty, making its end so human and so pitiful, must have attacked her too.

Then the drear funeral, with Andrew and his friends in weepers and tall hats, which the east wind brushed all awry, making them look like ferrets; the little coffin with the outlandish name and date, and "in her thirtieth year" emblazoned on it in cheap brass lettering; and the sloping pile of shingly earth, so soon to be stamped down over the island flower.

Slowly the friends would go, after shaking Andrew by the hand. He, feeling vaguely that he had murdered her whom he loved best, would linger, as a bird hovers for a time above the place where it has seen its mate fall, a mere mass of bloodstained feathers, to the gun.

When he was gone the island princess would be left alone with the wind sweeping across the sea, sounding around the Bass, and whistling wearily above Inch Keith to sing her threnody.





*From*  
A HATCHMENT  
*1913*



*Anastasio Lucena*

WE lay so near the shore in a steam tug that we could hear the noises of the city, and see the lights that looked so close it seemed that you could touch them by stretching out your hand. The watchmen called each hour, informing us that the night was serene, after having hailed the Blessed Virgin in a long-drawn-out wail.

Though we had lain there for three days in quarantine, none of us could sleep, partly on account of the mosquitoes and partly from the uneasy pitching of the tug-boat in the muddy current of the River Plate.

Three of us whiled away the time by fishing and by telling stories, the travellers' resource at such times, as we sat and smoked. Our budget was exhausted, and after having sat a long time silent in the sweltering heat, Mansel said suddenly: "I have told you all my yarns, but I can recollect a thing, there is no story in it, that left a strong impression on my mind."

We looked towards him gratefully as he sat cutting tobacco on his riding boot, with a long silver-handled knife. Tall, dark, and nervous, with round, prominent eyes, a sparse moustache, a skin tanned by the sun to a brick-dark

red, his thick, brown hair cut short like a French soldier's, or, as he called it, "all the same dog's back," although he wore the loose black merino trousers worn by all "camp-men" in those days, shoved into patent-leather riding boots, and slept, as we said, in his spurs, you saw he once had been a sailor, at the first glance. The sea leaves marks upon its votaries that even time never entirely rubs out, perhaps because, being an element so hostile to mankind, the difficulty of accustoming oneself to all its moods alters a man for life.

Rough-tongued and irascible, he was one of those who in their dictionaries had never come upon the verb "to fear."

He slowly rolled his cigarette and sheathed his silver-handled knife behind his back, leaving the haft just sticking out below his elbow on the right side. After expelling through his mouth and nostrils a sort of solfatara of blue smoke, he said: "Yes, call my yarn a memory, a recollection . . . for it is not a story, only a circumstance that I remember vividly, just as one never can forget an object seen in a flash of lightning . . . perhaps the word should be . . ." One of us interjected "an Impression"; he nodded and began his tale:—

"Night caught me, miles from a house, on a tired horse, and with a storm of wind and rain, such as you only see upon the plains. At first I galloped, hoping to arrive at some place where I could pass the night under a roof, and then as the darkness thickened, my horse, impervious to the spur, slackened down to a jog, which in these parts they

call a 'trotecito.' An hour or so of stumbling through the darkness, broken occasionally by lightning that seemed to run along the ground, of being suddenly brought up against a stream which seemed impossible to pass, and having to ride up banks to find a crossing, and the jog-trot became a walk.

"No matter how I spurred, nothing could move my horse; but just as I was thinking that I should have to pass the night out in the 'camp,' I thought I heard the distant barking of a dog. My horse had heard it too, and, turning him towards the sound, I felt him quicken up again to a slow, shuffling trot. It seemed I rode for hours, until at last the barking grew more furious, and in the distance a feeble light gleamed rather than shone, just like a vessel's mast-head light at sea. I brushed through some tall thistles, and by dint of whip and spur drove my horse, now so tired he could scarcely drag himself along, towards the barking of the dogs.

"At last my horse emerged out of the long, rough grass that clothes the southern Pampas, on to the open space before a house. Though it was dark I felt the difference at once, and the soft rustling of the wild grasses that sounds at night almost as if you rode through water ceased, and I began to hear my horse's footfall on the hard-trodden ground. The folded sheep were bleating in the chiquero, and when I turned towards it, I divined rather than saw the piles of cut, dried thorns, ranged in a circle, after the

fashion that one sees amongst the Arabs, forming the corral, from which an acrid smell, rising from all the fleeces closely packed together, floated on the night air.

“Advancing still a little further, I saw the house, a mud and wattle rancho, with its low thatched roof. Through the interstices of the walls came the reflection of the fire, which burned right in the middle of the floor. It seemed as if at last, after long years of battling with the storm, I had reached a haven of some sort. The rancho stood forlorn upon the open space. No tree, no shrub, no garden, or any patch of cultivated ground cut it off from the plain, that seemed to flow right up to it on every side.

“A dried and crumpled mare’s hide formed the door. As the wind beat on it and got in between it and the jambs, it surged about, reminding me of a boat heaving at a wharf. Right opposite the door, and twenty yards or so away, stood a hitching post of ñandubay, at which to fasten horses, and spurring up to it, I called out, ‘Ave María purísima,’ and received the answer, ‘Sin pecado concebida.’ A man seemed to rise from the darkness by my side, and saying in a gentle voice, ‘Welcome, get off and let your horse loose; he is too tired to stray,’ called off the pack of barking dogs and led me by the hand into the house. The mare’s hide swung to behind us stiffly, blotting out the night, and the bright glare from the blazing hearth was almost blinding to my eyes, fresh from the storm and rain. ‘Sit down upon one of those bullocks’ heads,’ said my entertainer; ‘your



horse cannot go far, and if he is too tired to travel in the morning I will give you one of mine.'

"He spoke, and as he stood before the fire that burned on the low hearth, erect and sinewy, with his long mane of jet-black hair, a little flecked with grey, falling down on his shoulders, I saw that he was blind. His eyes appeared quite perfect, but evidently saw nothing, and as he moved about the rancho he now and then touched with his shoulder or his head some of the horse gear that hung from pegs upon the walls. He must have somehow felt I saw his great calamity—for out upon the plains what cross could possibly be heavier to bear?—for he said: 'Yes, I am blind. The visitation came from God, only three years ago. It crept upon me by degrees, no one knows how, although a doctor in the town said it was paralysis of the optic nerve; not that I cared much what he said, for when a man is blind it comes from God, like death or any other ill.'

"He paused and motioned with his hand towards me, just as if he saw, towards the bullocks' heads, and when I squatted down, he too took his seat on one of them. 'Take off your boots,' he said, 'and dry yourself, and throw some wood upon the fire—it is there in the corner; my son, he who sleeps there on his recado, took care to pile up plenty, for I smelt the coming of the storm.'

"I had not seen the boy, who now turned on his elbow and looked up. His father went on: 'He is tired, for at this moment we are alone here in the rancho; my wife and family

have gone to town, and he has had to be on horseback all the day, from the time when the false dawn streaks the sky, till sundown, doing all the work.' As I piled the wood upon the fire my host looked towards me and said: 'How tall you are!' And when I asked him how he knew, said: 'The voice comes from the rafters, as it were. We blind think much on things that in our seeing days we took no notice of.'

"The storm still raged outside, and as my things dried before the fire of bones and ñandubay, that feeling of contentment that comfort brings with it, after exposure to the weather for long hours, stole over me. The boy upon his saddle had turned his face away from the glowing embers, and the hut felt like a ship at sea; and I, a passenger under the guidance of a pilot who was blind, felt myself listening to his talk, as if he were a friend of years, as happens in the plains when men meet casually, just as it happens with the other animals. A horse puts out its head and snuffles, and his fellow instantly becomes his friend, or at least he is not actively his enemy, and the same thing occurs with men.

"Under the directions of my host, I put a side of mutton down to roast, skewering it upon an iron spit, which he said I should find stuck in the thatch. The roast crackled and sputtered, and the rich juices fell into the fire and made it fiercer, and as it roasted slowly, we passed round the maté, I having put the kettle and the bag of yerba into the blind man's hand. Practice had made it just as easy for him to pour the water into the hole cut in the gourd as it is for

a man who wears a sword to sheathe it in the dark. So after having filled the gourd, and taking a long pull of it to see that it was working properly, he passed it to me, and I sucked the hot, bitter mixture with the avidity of a man who has been storm-tossed and has not eaten since the early dawn.

“My host had the not unnatural curiosity of a defenceless man upon a frontier to know if there was any recent movement amongst the Indians, for his fate would not have been uncertain if at any time—even upon the night we sat and talked—a raiding party of the Tchehuelches or the Pampas had happened to pass by. ‘Our lives,’ he said, ‘are in God’s hand,’ a truism which it was hard to controvert, though at the same time, situated as we were, the intervention of a good and speedy horse might have assisted fate. Still, when he listened now and then, and held the maté half-way to his lips, and gave that strained attention that makes the attitude of listening in blind men seem, as it were, to indicate some extra sense in them, I watched him with some trepidation till he said: ‘It is nothing, only a stallion rounding up his mares. Each night,’ he said, ‘I saddle up a horse and leave him tied under a shed behind the house, and if I could but get my hand upon his mane I might yet lead the Indians a dance.’ He felt my look of wonder, and rejoined: ‘I should ride keeping the wind upon my cheek, and as the night is dark, I and the Indians would be on an equality. In fact, I think that if there were any advantage,

it would be upon my side, for I know all the "camps" for leagues on every side, so well, that I can cross them easily, even though I am blind.'

"I looked at him, and thought what a fine figure he would look wrapped in a double darkness, with his hair flying in the wind, and his eyes open, but unseeing, as he galloped through the night. When the roast was ready, I took the horn in which was kept the salt and water, from a peg and sprinkled it, and then, with a courteous gesture, my host pointed towards the meat, and we fell to, cutting great junks off with our knives and, holding one end in our teeth, cut them down to our lips. We talked about the usual topics of the 'camp,' the marks of horses, Indian incursions, the accursed ways of government, the locusts, and the things that in such countries replace the reports of parliaments and police-courts, and all the villainies of city life.

"Then we lay down upon our saddles, after the tall, blind Gaucho, whose name I learned was Anastasio Lucena, had said the rosary.

"Morning broke fine and clear, with a slight film of frost upon the grass. In the chiquero the sheep were bleating to be let out, and cattle on the hills got up and stretched themselves, looking like camels as they stood with their heads high and their hind-quarters drooping to the ground. A distant wood behind a little hill was hung suspended in the sky, with the trees growing towards the earth by an effect of mirage, and from the world there came a smell of freshness

and a sensation of new birth. My horse was not in a fit state to travel, and when the boy had driven the tropilla up to the corral, Anastasio Lucena unsaddled and let loose the horse he always kept tied up at night for fear of Indians, which rolled and neighed and then galloped off to seek its fellows in the 'camp.' We stood in the corral, and, as I swung the lasso round my head two or three times to see it had no kinks, I said to Anastasio: 'Which of the horses may I catch?'

"He looked towards them just as if he saw them perfectly, and answered: 'Any one you like except the little doradillo. He is my wife's and she will soon be back again from town, where she has gone to buy the children clothes.'

"As the tropilla galloped round the corral I marked a cream-coloured with a black tail and mane, and threw the lasso, which uncoiled just like a snake and settled round his neck. 'Which have you caught?' asked Anastasio; and I answered, 'The black-cream-colour.' He smiled and said: 'A little quick to mount, but a good horse—well, let him loose tonight just after dark, when you get to the Estancia de la Cascada, a short ten leagues away, and by the morning he will be back at home. Your horse I will have collared to the mare, and you can send for him in a week or so, when he is rested and fit again for work.'

"I saddled up, thanked Anastasio Lucena for his hospitality, who answered that he was my servant, and that his house was mine whenever I might pass. Then mounting,

not without difficulty, for the black-cream-colour was quick as lightning in the turns he made the instant that you raised your foot towards the stirrup, and started with a rush. After the first bound or two was over and the horse settled to a steady lope, I turned and looked back towards the rancho where I had passed the night. Upon the threshold stood its owner, tall and erect; his long black hair just flecked with grey, falling down on his shoulders, reminded me somehow of pictures of Christ that I had seen. His head was turned towards the sound of the black-cream-colour's hoofs, and his eyes, open but sightless, seemed to take in the Pampa with its indomitable space."

Mansel stopped, passed his own hand across his eyes as if they pained him with the intensity of the impression they had received long years ago, and then, as if he were talking to himself, said:

"Adiós, Anastasio Lucena—or perhaps I ought to say 'so long.' Perhaps he has now taken the long galopito on which his want of sight was not a hindrance to him, or perhaps he now sees better than we do ourselves. *Quién sabe?* Anyhow, he has come back to me tonight, and I am glad to thank him once more for his hospitality, and his good cream-colour with the black tail and mane."



*From*

BROUGHT FORWARD

*1916*



## *With the North-East Wind*

**A** NORTH-EAST haar had hung the city with a pall of grey. It gave an air of hardness to the stone-built houses, blending them with the stone-paved streets, till you could scarce see where the houses ended and the street began. A thin grey dust hung in the air. It coloured everything, and people's faces all looked pinched with the first touch of autumn cold. The wind, boisterous and gusty, whisked the soot-grimed city leaves about in the high suburb at the foot of a long range of hills, making one think it would be easy to have done with life on such an uncongenial day. Tramways were packed with people of the working class, all of them of the alert, quick-witted type only to be seen in the great city on the Clyde, in all our Empire, and comparable alone to the dwellers in Chicago for dry vivacity.

By the air they wore of chastened pleasure, all those who knew them saw that they were intent upon a funeral. To serious-minded men such as are they, for all their quickness, nothing is so soul-filling, for it is of the nature of a fact that no one can deny. A wedding has its possibilities, for it may lead to children, or divorce, but funerals are in an-

other category. At them the Scottish people is at its best, for never more than then does the deep underlying tenderness peep through the hardness of the rind. On foot and in the tramways, but most especially on foot, converged long lines of men and women, though fewer women, for the national prejudice that in years gone by thought it not decent for a wife to follow to the grave her husband's coffin, still holds a little in the north. Yet there was something in the crowd that showed it was to attend no common funeral, that they were "stepping west." No one wore black, except a minister or two, who looked a little like the belated rook you sometimes see amongst a flock of seagulls, in that vast ocean of grey tweed.

They tramped along, the whistling north-east wind pinching their features, making their eyes run, and as they went, almost unconsciously they fell into procession, for beyond the tramway line, a country lane that had not quite put on the graces of a street, though straggling houses were dotted here and there along it, received the crowd and marshalled it, as it were mechanically, without volition of its own. Kept in between the walls, and blocked in front by the hearse and long procession of the mourning coaches, the people slowly surged along. The greater portion of the crowd were townsmen, but there were miners, washed and in their Sunday best. Their faces showed the blue marks of healed-up scars into which coal dust or gunpowder had become tattooed, scars gained in the battle of their lives down in the pits,

remembrances of falls of rock or of occasions when the mine had "fired upon them."

Many had known Keir Hardie in his youth, had "wrocht wi' him outby," at Blantyre, at Hamilton, in Ayrshire, and all of them had heard him speak a hundred times. Even to those who had not heard him, his name was as a household word. Miners predominated, but men of every trade were there. Many were members of that black-coated proletariat, whose narrow circumstances and daily struggle for appearances make their life harder to them than is the life of any working man before he has had to dye his hair. Women tramped, too, for the dead leader had been a champion of their sex. They all respected him, loving him with that half-contemptuous gratitude that women often show to men who make the "woman question" the object of their lives.

After the Scottish fashion at a funeral, greetings were freely passed, and Reid, who hadna' seen his friend Mac-kinder since the time of the Mid-Lanark fight, greeted him with "Ye mind when first Keir Hardie was puttin' up for Parliament," and wrung his hand, hardened in the mine, with one as hardened, and instantly began to recall elections of the past.

"Ye mind yon Wishaw meeting?"

"Aye, ou aye; ye mean when a' they Irish wouldna' hear John Ferguson. Man, he almost grat after the meeting about it."

### *With the North-East Wind*

"Aye, but they gied Hardie himself a maist respectful hearing . . . aye, ou aye."

Others remembered him a boy, and others in his home at Cumnock, but all spoke of him with affection, holding him as something of their own, apart from other politicians, almost apart from men.

Old comrades who had been with him either at this election or that meeting, had helped or had intended to have helped at the crises of his life, fought their old battles over, as they tramped along, all shivering in the wind.

The procession reached a long dip in the road, and the head of it, full half a mile away, could be seen gathered round the hearse, outside the chapel of the crematorium, whose ominous tall chimney, through which the ashes, and perchance the souls, of thousands have escaped towards some empyrean or another, towered up starkly. At last all had arrived, and the small open space was crowded, the hearse and carriages appearing stuck amongst the people, like raisins in a cake, so thick they pressed upon them. The chapel, differing from the ordinary chapel of the faiths as much as does a motor driver from a cabman, had an air as of modernity about it, which contrasted strangely with the ordinary looking crowd, the adjacent hills, the decent mourning coaches and the black-coated undertakers who bore the coffin up the steps. Outside, the wind whistled and swayed the soot-stained trees about; but inside the chapel the heat was stifling.



### *With the North-East Wind*

When all was duly done, and long exordiums passed upon the man who in his life had been the target for the abuse of press and pulpit, the coffin slid away to its appointed place. One thought one heard the roaring of the flames, and somehow missed the familiar lowering of the body . . . earth to earth . . . to which the centuries of use and wont have made us all familiar, though dust to dust in this case was the more appropriate.

In either case, the book is closed for ever, and the familiar face is seen no more.

So, standing just outside the chapel in the cold, waiting till all the usual greetings had been exchanged, I fell a-musing on the man whom I had known so well. I saw him as he was thirty years ago, outlined against a bing or standing in a quarry in some mining village, and heard his once familiar address of "Men." He used no other in those days, to the immense disgust of legislators and other worthy but unimaginative men whom he might chance to meet. About him seemed to stand a shadowy band, most of whom now are dead or lost to view, or have gone under in the fight.

John Ferguson was there, the old-time Irish leader, the friend of Davitt and of Butt. Tall and erect he stood, dressed in his long frock-coat, his roll of papers in one hand, and with the other stuck into his breast, with all the air of being the last Roman left alive. Tom Mann, with his black hair, his flashing eyes, and his tumultuous speech peppered with expletives. Beside him, Sandy Haddow, of Parkhead, mas-

### *With the North-East Wind*

sive and Doric in his speech, with a grey woollen comforter rolled round his neck, and hands like panels of a door; Champion, pale, slight, and interesting, still the artillery officer, in spite of Socialism; John Burns and Small, the miners' agent, with his close brown beard and taste for literature. Smillie stood near, he of the seven elections, and then checkweigher at a pit, either at Cadzow or Larkhall. There, too, was silver-tongued Shaw Maxwell and Chisholm Robertson, looking out darkly on the world through tinted spectacles; with him Bruce Glasier, girt with a red sash and with an aureole of fair curly hair around his head, half poet and half revolutionary.

They were all young and ardent, and as I mused upon them and their fate, and upon those of them who have gone down into the oblivion that waits for those who live before their time, I shivered in the wind.

Had he, too, lived in vain, he whose scant ashes were no doubt by this time all collected in an urn, and did they really represent all that remained of him?

Standing amongst the band of shadowy comrades I had known, I saw him, simple and yet with something of the prophet in his air, and something of the seer. Effective and yet ineffectual, something there was about him that attracted little children to him, and, I should think, lost dogs. He made mistakes, but then those who make no mistakes seldom make anything. His life was one long battle, so it seemed to me that it was fitting that at his funeral the

north-east wind should howl amongst the trees, tossing and twisting them as he himself was twisted and storm-tossed in his tempestuous passage through the world.

As the crowd moved away, and in the hearse and mourning coaches the spavined horses limped slowly down the road, a gleam of sunshine, such as had shone too little in his life, lighted up everything.

The swaying trees and dark, grey houses of the ugly suburb of the town were all transfigured for a moment. The chapel door was closed, and from the chimney of the crematorium a faint blue smoke was issuing, which, by degrees, faded into the atmosphere, just as the soul, for all I know, may melt into the air.

When the last stragglers had gone, and bits of paper scurried uneasily along before the wind, the world seemed empty, with nothing friendly in it, but the shoulder of Ben Lomond peeping out shyly over the Kilpatrick Hills.

## *El Tango Argentino*

**M**OTOR-CARS swept up to the covered passage of the front door of the hotel, one of those international caravansaries that pass their clients through a sort of vulgarizing process that blots out every type. It makes the Argentine, the French, the Englishman, and the American all alike before the power of wealth.

The cars surged up as silently as snow falls from a fir tree in a thaw, and with the same soft swishing noise. Tall, liveried porters opened the doors (although, of course, each car was duly furnished with a footman) so nobly that any one of them would have graced any situation in the State.

The ladies stepped down delicately, showing a fleeting vision of a leg in a transparent stocking, just for an instant, through the slashing of their skirts. They knew that every man, their footman, driver, the giant watchers at the gate, and all who at the time were going into the hotel, saw and were moved by what they saw just for a moment; but the fact did not trouble them at all. It rather pleased them, for the most virtuous feel a pleasurable emotion when they know that they excite. So it will be for ever, for thus and not by votes alone they show that they are to the full men's equals, let the law do its worst.

## *El Tango Argentino*

Inside the hotel, heated by steam, and with an atmosphere of scent and flesh that went straight to the head just as the fumes of whisky set a drinker's nerves agog, were seated all the finest flowers of the cosmopolitan society of the French capital.

Lesbos had sent its legions, and women looked at one another appreciatively, scanning each item of their neighbours' clothes, and with their colour heightening when by chance their eyes met those of another priestess of their sect.

Rich rastaquaoures, their hats too shiny, and their boots too tight, their coats fitting too closely, their sticks mounted with great gold knobs, walked about or sat at little tables, all talking strange varieties of French.

Americans, the men apparently all run out of the same mould, the women apt as monkeys to imitate all that they saw in dress, in fashion and in style, and more adaptable than any other women in the world from lack of all traditions, conversed in their high nasal tones. Spanish-Americans from every one of the Republics were well represented, all talking about money: of how Doña Fulana Pérez had given fifteen hundred francs for her new hat, or Don Fulano had just scored a million on the Bourse.

Jews and more Jews, and Jewesses and still more Jewesses, were there, some of them married to Christians and turned Catholic, but betrayed by their Semitic type, although they talked of Lourdes and of the Holy Father with the best.

After the "five-o'clock," turned to a heavy meal of toast

### *El Tango Argentino*

and buns, of Hügel loaf, of sandwiches, and of hot cake, the scented throng, restored by the refection after the day's hard work of shopping, of driving here and there like souls in purgatory to call on people that they detested, and other labours of a like nature, slowly adjourned to a great hall in which a band was playing. As they walked through the passages, men pressed close up to women and murmured in their ears, telling them anecdotes that made them flush and giggle as they protested in an unprotesting style. Those were the days of the first advent of the Tango Argentino, the dance that since has circled the whole world, as it were, in a movement of the hips. Ladies pronounced it charming as they half closed their eyes and let a little shiver run across their lips. Men said it was the only dance that was worth dancing. It was so Spanish, so unconventional, and combined all the æsthetic movements of the figures on an Etruscan vase with the strange grace of the Hungarian gipsies . . . it was so, as one may say, so . . . as you may say . . . you know.

When all were seated, the band, Hungarians, of course—oh, those dear gipsies!—struck out into a rhythm, half rag-time, half habanera, canaille, but sensuous, and hands involuntarily, even the most aristocratic hands—of ladies whose immediate progenitors had been pork-packers in Chicago, or gambusinos who had struck it rich in Zacatecas—tapped delicately, but usually a little out of time, upon the backs of chairs.



## *El Tango Argentino*

A tall young man, looking as if he had got a holiday from a tailor's fashion plate, his hair sleek, black, and stuck down to his head with a cosmetic, his trousers so immaculately creased they seemed cut out of cardboard, led out a girl dressed in a skirt so tight that she could not have moved in it had it not been cut open to the knee.

Standing so close that one well-creased trouser leg disappeared in the tight skirt, he clasped her round the waist, holding her hand almost before her face. They twirled about, now bending low, now throwing out a leg, and then again revolving, all with a movement of the hips that seemed to blend the well-creased trouser and the half-open skirt into one inharmonious whole. The music grew more furious and the steps multiplied, till with a bound the girl threw herself for an instant into the male dancer's arms, who put her back again upon the ground with as much care as if she had been a new-laid egg, and the pair bowed and disappeared.

Discreet applause broke forth, and exclamations such as "wonderful," "what grace," "Vivent les Espagnoles," for the discriminating audience took no heed of independence days, of mere political changes and the like, and seemed to think that Buenos Ayres was a part of Spain, never having heard of San Martín, Bolívar, Páez, and their fellow-liberators.

Paris, London, and New York were to that fashionable crowd the world, and anything outside—except, of course,

## *El Tango Argentino*

the Hungarian gipsies and the Tango dancers—barbarous and beyond the pale.

After the Tango came “*La Maxixe Brésilienne*,” rather more languorous and more befitting to the dwellers in the tropics than was its cousin from the plains. Again the discreet applause broke out, the audience murmuring “charming,” that universal adjective that gives an air of being in a perpetual pastrycook’s when ladies signify delight. Smiles and sly glances at their friends showed that the dancers’ efforts at indecency had been appreciated.

Slowly the hall and tea-rooms of the great hotel emptied themselves, and in the corridors and passages the smell of scent still lingered, just as stale incense lingers in a church.

Motor-cars took away the ladies and their friends, and drivers, who had shivered in the cold whilst the crowd inside sweated in the central heating, exchanged the time of day with the liveried doorkeepers, one of them asking anxiously, “Dis, Anatole, as-tu vu mes vaches?”

With the soft closing of a well-hung door the last car took its perfumed freight away, leaving upon the steps a group of men, who remained talking over, or, as they would say, undressing, all the ladies who had gone.

“Argentine Tango, eh?” I thought, after my friends had left me all alone. Well, well, it has changed devilishly upon its passage overseas, even discounting the difference of the setting of the place where first I saw it danced so many

## *El Tango Argentino*

years ago. So, sauntering down, I took a chair far back upon the terrace of the Café de la Paix, so that the sellers of *La Patrie*, and the men who have some strange new toy, or views of Paris in a long album like a broken concertina, should not tread upon my toes.

Over a Porto Blanc and a Brazilian cigarette, lulled by the noise of Paris and the raucous cries of the street-venders, I fell into a doze.

Gradually the smell of petrol and of horse-dung, the two most potent perfumes in our modern life, seemed to be blown away. Dyed heads and faces scraped till they looked blue as a baboon's; young men who looked like girls, with painted faces and with mincing airs; the raddled women, ragged men, and hags huddled in knitted shawls, lame horses, and taxi-cab drivers sitting nodding on their boxes—all faded into space, and from the nothing that is the past arose another scene.

I saw myself with Witham and his brother, whose name I have forgotten, Eduardo Peña, Congreve, and Eustaquio Medina, on a small rancho in an elbow of the great River Yi. The rancho stood upon a little hill. A quarter of a mile or so away the dense and thorny monté of hard-wood trees that fringed the river seemed to roll up towards it like a sea. The house was built of yellow pine sent from the United States. The roof was shingled, and the rancho stood planked down upon the plain, looking exactly like a box. Some fifty yards

## *El Tango Argentino*

away stood a thatched hut that served as kitchen, and on its floor the cattle herders used to sleep upon their horse-gear with their feet towards the fire.

The corrals for horses and for sheep were just a little farther off, and underneath a shed a horse stood saddled day in, day out, and perhaps does so yet, if the old rancho still resists the winds.

Four or five horses, saddled and bridled, stood tied to a great post, for we were just about to mount to ride a league or two to a Baile, at the house of Frutos Barragán. Just after sunset we set out, as the sweet scent that the grasses of the plains send forth after a long day of heat perfumed the evening air.

The night was clear and starry, and above our heads was hung the Southern Cross. So bright the stars shone out that one could see almost a mile away; but yet all the perspective of the plains and woods was altered. Hillocks were sometimes undistinguishable, at other times loomed up like houses. Woods seemed to sway and heave, and by the sides of streams bunches of pampa grass stood stark as sentinels, their feathery tufts looking like plumes upon an Indian's lance.

The horses shook their bridles with a clear, ringing sound as they stepped double, and their riders, swaying lightly in their seats, seemed to form part and parcel of the animals they rode.

Now and then little owls flew noiselessly beside us, circling

### *El Tango Argentino*

above our heads, and then dropped noiselessly upon a bush. Eustaquio Medina, who knew the district as a sailor knows the seas where he was born, rode in the front of us. As his horse shied at a shadow on the grass or at the bones of some dead animal, he swung his whip round ceaselessly, until the moonlight playing on the silver-mounted stock seemed to transform it to an aureole that flickered about his head. Now and then somebody dismounted to tighten up his girth, his horse twisting and turning round uneasily the while, and, when he raised his foot towards the stirrup, starting off with a bound.

Time seemed to disappear and space be swallowed in the intoxicating gallop, so that, when Eustaquio Medina paused for an instant to strike the crossing of a stream, we felt annoyed with him, although no hound that follows a hot scent could have gone truer on his line.

Dogs barking close at hand warned us our ride was almost over, and as we galloped up a rise Eustaquio Medina pulled up and turned to us.

"There is the house," he said, "just at the bottom of the hollow, only five squares away," and as we saw the flicker of the lights, he struck his palm upon his mouth after the Indian fashion, and raised a piercing cry. Easing his hand, he drove his spurs into his horse, who started with a bound into full speed, and as he galloped down the hill we followed him, all yelling furiously.

Just at the hitching-post we drew up with a jerk, our

## *El Tango Argentino*

horses snorting as they edged off sideways from the black shadow that it cast upon the ground. Horses stood about everywhere, some tied and others hobbled, and from the house there came the strains of an accordion and the tinkling of guitars.

Asking permission to dismount, we hailed the owner of the house, a tall, old Gaucho, Frutos Barragán, as he stood waiting by the door, holding a maté in his hand. He bade us welcome, telling us to tie our horses up, not too far out of sight, for, as he said, "It is not good to give facilities to rogues, if they should chance to be about."

In the low, straw-thatched rancho, with its eaves blackened by the smoke, three or four iron bowls, filled with mare's fat, and with a cotton wick that needed constant trimming, stuck upon iron cattle-brands, were burning fitfully.

They cast deep shadows in the corners of the room, and when they flickered up occasionally the light fell on the dark and sun-tanned faces of the tall, wiry Gauchos and the light cotton dresses of the women as they sat with their chairs tilted up against the wall. Some thick-set Basques, an Englishman or two in riding breeches, and one or two Italians made up the company. The floor was earth, stamped hard till it shone like cement, and as the Gauchos walked upon it, their heavy spurs clinked with a noise like fetters as they trailed them on the ground.

An old, blind Paraguayan played on the guitar, and a



## *El Tango Argentino*

huge negro accompanied him on an accordion. Their united efforts produced a music which certainly was vigorous enough, and now and then, one or the other of them broke into a song, high-pitched and melancholy, which, if you listened to it long enough, forced you to try to imitate its wailing melody and its strange intervals.

Fumes of tobacco and rum hung in the air, and of a strong and heady wine from Catalonia, much favoured by the ladies, which they drank from a tumbler, passing it to one another, after the fashion of a grace-cup at a City dinner, with great gravity. At last the singing ceased, and the orchestra struck up a Tango, slow, marked, and rhythmical.

Men rose, and, taking off their spurs, walked gravely to the corner of the room where sat the women huddled together as if they sought protection from each other, and with a compliment led them out upon the floor. The flowing poncho and the loose chiripá, which served as trousers, swung about just as the tartans of a Highlander swing as he dances, giving an air of ease to all the movements of the Gauchos as they revolved, their partners' heads peeping above their shoulders, and their hips moving to and fro.

At times they parted, and set to one another gravely, and then the man, advancing, clasped his partner round the waist and seemed to push her backwards, with her eyes half-closed and an expression of beatitude. Gravity was the keynote of the scene, and though the movements of the dance were as significant as it was possible for the dancers

### *El Tango Argentino*

to achieve, the effect was graceful, and the soft, gliding motion and the waving of the parti-coloured clothes, wild and original, in the dim, flickering light.

Rum flowed during the intervals. The dancers wiped the perspiration from their brows, the men with the silk handkerchiefs they wore about their necks, the women with their sleeves. Tangos, cielitos, and pericones succeeded one another, and still the atmosphere grew thicker, and the lights seemed to flicker through a haze, as the dust rose from the mud floor. Still the old Paraguayan and the negro kept on playing with the sweat running down their faces, smoking and drinking rum in their brief intervals of rest, and when the music ceased for a moment, the wild neighing of a horse tied in the moonlight to a post, sounded as if he called his master to come out and gallop home again.

The night wore on, and still the negro and the Paraguayan stuck at their instruments. Skirts swung and ponchos waved, whilst maté circulated amongst the older men as they stood grouped about the door.

Then came a lull, and as men whispered in their partners' ears, telling them, after the fashion of the Gauchos, that they were lovely, their hair like jet, their eyes bright as "las tres Marías," and all the compliments which in their case were stereotyped and handed down for generations, loud voices rose, and in an instant two Gauchos bounded out upon the floor.

Long silver-handled knives were in their hands, their

### *El Tango Argentino*

ponchos wrapped round their left arms served them as bucklers, and as they crouched, like cats about to spring, they poured out blasphemies.

"Stop this!" cried Frutos Barragán; but even as he spoke, a knife-thrust planted in the stomach stretched one upon the floor. Blood gushed out from his mouth, his belly fell like a pricked bladder, and a dark stream of blood trickled upon the ground as he lay writhing in his death agony.

The iron bowls were overturned, and in the dark girls screamed and the men crowded to the door. When they emerged into the moonlight, leaving the dying man upon the floor, the murderer was gone; and as they looked at one another there came a voice shouting out, "Adiós, Barragán! Thus does Vicente Castro pay his debts when a man tries to steal his girl," and the faint footfalls of an unshod horse galloping far out upon the plain.

I started, and the waiter standing by my side said, "Eighty centimes"; and down the boulevard echoed the harsh cry, "*La Patrie*, achetez *La Patrie*," and the rolling of the cabs.



*From*  
REDEEMED  
*1927*





## *Wilfrid Scawen Blunt*

**R**IGHT in the middle of a ride cut in the woods, a ride he must have shot and ridden over a thousand times, under a great grass mound, looking like an ancient tumulus of some prehistoric chief, sleeps Wilfrid Blunt.

Sweet chestnuts, birches, and scrub-oak trees fringe the ride. Under their branches is a row of yew trees, planted by himself. In future years, when they are tall and dark, they will stand sentinels in a long line on each side of the grave, and in the winter nights the owls will sit amongst their branches, calling and answering one another, a nightly threnody.

Thistles and tufts of campion, dog's mercury, and enchanter's nightshade grow so thickly that they carpet all the grass. Rabbits limp noiselessly across the open ride; in the keen east wind the autumn leaves shiver down, mottled and red and golden yellow; silence broods over the whole wood, although the house is not three hundred yards away.

After his agitated life, in which he played so many parts, sculptor and poet, traveller, lover, politician, diplomat, and man of fashion, and at the last a Sussex squire, loving his

trees, the speech and people of his native place above all things on earth, he lies at rest.

The old-world Jacobean house with its yew hedges, paths of broken flags, and steps that lead to the front door, between whose crevices spring tufts of ragweed, garlanded by a thick growth of traveller's joy clinging to the balustrade, is empty and forlorn; but over all, in everything, still lingers and will linger many a day the traces of his strange, complex personality. So that, although the shrine is empty, the spirit haunts it, and after all the spirit, not the body of the saint, makes the shrine sacred to the true adept.

So strong is the impression of the vanished owner stamped, that when you see the old familiar objects hanging in the stone hall, the peacock's skin, the Arab saddle-bags, the lasso and the bolas, the mameluke bits, and the great brass coffee-pots disposed about the walls, it seems impossible that in the panelled room you will not see the figure of the squire dressed in his Arab clothes, his full white beard spread like a Viking's on his chest, reading a ponderous tome in vellum, seated by a fire of logs piled in a Sussex grate.

The Morris tapestry, the great oak tables, the newelled staircase with its door across the landing, the priest's secret chamber, the prints of horses, horses, and still more horses, from the Godolphin Arab down to his own Mesaud, hang on the walls.

All is unchanged; the Darnley Arab, and the spotted Polish stallion, with the old French print of the execution of

the spy, who puts aside his dog with his left hand to save it from the bullets, a print on which its owner never looked without a pang, they all are there.

The thick yew hedges, and the Attar roses growing between old lines of box in the walled garden outside the dining-room, and the innumerable weather-boarded sheds and barns that cluster round the house, seem full of something that is no longer there, yet still pervades the atmosphere as strongly as in life.

If in all England there is a house that is the embodiment of him who owned it, the little Jacobean mansion with its lichened walls, its stone-slabbed roof, its air as of a camp, inside, and outside, of an age when men built slowly, to please the eye and to defy the assaults of time, Newbuildings is the place.

The piles of Arab blankets in the corners of the rooms, the newest books and magazines upon the tables, speak of a man who touched life at a hundred points. Although so various, still at the core a country gentleman, a mighty lover of good horses, and breeding many of them from his famed Arab stud, yet not a country gentleman who brought London to the country after the modern way, but one who lived much as his forefathers lived for generations back.

Withal, as Easterns say, a great protector of the poor; not overmuch concerned about their rights, but sympathizing heartily with their wrongs and with their poverty. Amongst the mass of mediocrities that constitute, have constituted,

*Wilfrid Scawen Blunt*

and will for ever constitute mankind, unless there is a new creation conceived upon a different plan, he moved amongst his fellow-men, somewhat aloof and unapproachable, lashing their base ambitions with a steel whip, and yet with many a foible of his own, for without weaknesses no man can be strong.

Born out of his generation, as are the most of men who achieve anything but mere material success, he yet was a true Englishman, a very Englishman of the Elizabethan breed, with something in him of the Renaissance in his love of sport and culture, a combination rare today, for now the sportsman is so often nothing but a sportsman, the man of culture nothing but a prig.

Science, as manifested in the power to take a good, dull man by air to Bagdad and bring him back again an ignoramus still, with but the local ulcer in his cheek to show for it, left him, I fancy, all unmoved.

Culture to him, as to the Orientals, with whom he lived so much and sympathized so deeply, was an affair of spirit and of mind not to be measured by material progress, or even by the arts. An Arab with his simple life, his scanty fare of dates and coarse bread toasted on the embers, and his perpetual speculations on the attributes of God, was a far greater object of his admiration than is the modern plutocrat, living in luxury and paying thousands for a picture that he is ordered to admire, without a thought beyond materialism.

*Wilfrid Scarwen Blunt*

He held the greater portion of the ills to which humanity is heir are irremediable, and that the best mankind can do is to endure them silently, trusting in Allah's mercy and compassion, without expecting that he will alter nature's laws on our behoof.

No man was ever less a Pagan or a Hellenist than was this cultured English gentleman, with his love of adventure and his deep sympathy for the oppressed in every portion of the world.

In type of body and of mind he was essentially a northerner, except that he detested compromise, so dear to northerners, as fervently as any member of the Latin race.

Bread was bread, verily, to him, and wine was wine; the two could never mix their essences and become the hotch-potch dear to politicians, and hence the secret of his aloofness from our public life, failure to comprehend it, and its amazement at his attitude. At the same time, there never lived a man more fitted to enjoy and understand all that was best in English country life, for he loved hospitality, enjoyed a gallop on the downs, or a hot corner in the woods, as much as any chuckle-headed Sussex squire of the whole neighbourhood. I cannot see him seated on the bench at Quarter Sessions; but if he ever went there I am sure his sympathies were with the poachers and the tramps, being himself a sportsman and a super-tramp, taking the whole world as his beat.

Something there was of the Old Testament in his mental

*Wilfrid Scawen Blunt*

bias, either inherited or perhaps superinduced by his long intercourse with the Arabs, the most biblical of men.

Thus in the fine old house plenished with Chippendale and Jacobean furniture, devoid of most of the appliances of modern life, surrounded by his slow-witted Sussex dependents, who all adored him, seeing his real kindness of heart beneath a somewhat stern exterior, he seemed a paradox.

His quiet surroundings, the unbroken calm in the old, solitary house, disturbed but by the cooing of the fantail pigeons in the yard as they sat sunning themselves before their doors in the barrel stuck up on a pole, the smell of elder flowers that the breeze now and then wafted through open windows (scawen, he used to say, was Cornish for an elder), all spoke of rural England, that rural England that has almost disappeared. It was his pride to keep the old-world air about his mansion-house, although his thoughts must have so often wrapped him in the travellers' melancholy, and now and then he must have wished to feel the sun burning between his shoulders, to hear the gurgling of the kneeling camels and the shrill neighing of the horses, tethered and picketed.

If he occasionally let his thoughts stray towards the East and longed to smell the acrid scent of the camp-fire of camels' dung, he kept his counsel, for no man ever wore his heart less on his sleeve than he did, knowing the world is full of jackdaws, and that when hearts lie open, they delight to peck at them.



## *Wilfrid Scawen Blunt*

Still to his house there came a never-ending string of pilgrims, Arabs and Persians, Turks, Indians, and all sorts and kinds more or less materialized dwellers in Mesopotamia, generally each with his tale of woe and of oppression, real or fancied, and all with open palms.

Long hours he listened to them, for he was surely born in Tarshish in the next house to the Apostle of the Gentiles, suffering fools, if not gladly, at least patiently, and, I imagine, dealing out largesse with an unsparing hand.

If he believed all that they told him is difficult to say; but possibly his passion for the liberty of down-trodden nationalities, and his hatred of imperialism, sometimes rendered him their prey.

Certain it is that almost all that he foretold in regard to the East thirty or forty years ago, has become justified by events.

His was a voice as of a Cassandra prophesying in the wilderness, in the days when he warned England that Egypt would be free, that Ireland would become a nation, and that our Indian Empire was seething with revolt.

Had he been listened to, the measures that have been wrung from us by force would have been graciously bestowed; but then who looks for vision in a statesman or a man of business and does not find himself deceived?

Little by little he withdrew from public life, leaving a world that had not understood him, and that he himself had often failed to understand, for your keen intellect and

*Wilfrid Scawen Blunt*

piercing vision often betray their owner, making him see the mirage floating in the air so clearly that he fails to catch the string of camels plodding laboriously through the sand, as his eye dwells on the castles and the towers so soon to be dissolved.

Sussex eventually claimed him for its own, and though his active mind was always occupied with Eastern politics, his stud and his estate, the welfare of his tenants and all the engrossing details of a country life enmeshed him, as they always have enmeshed men of his class and race in their declining years.

His house became, as it were, a place of pilgrimage to which young poets, rising politicians, breeders of Arab horses coming from many lands, and his old friends resorted, to revel in his pungent conversation, receive advice, to buy a horse occasionally and to be received with the large hospitality worthy of one who had been so long a dweller in the tents.

No man gave forth more freely of the best he had at his command, and years and travel, with an enormous store of miscellaneous reading, had made his mind a very granary of recondite information that he was always ready to impart.

Modest about his own achievements, to the point that few of his old friends had ever heard of the recumbent statue of his brother wrought with his own hands, in Crawley Priory, he seldom talked about his Eastern journeys except

*Wilfrid Scawen Blunt*

to intimates, and even then quite unassumingly. Time will do him justice, for time alone holds a judicial scale between a man and the warped judgments of his contemporaries.

His weaknesses will be forgotten. Your petty minds only see petty objects. Genius is far beyond their purview.

Fame surely will reserve a niche for the tall figure in its Arab clothes, that for so many years moved through the panelled rooms in the old Jacobean house, pausing to take a book up now and then, or to adjust a bunch of the many-coloured asters in which he took such pride, and always followed by a Blenheim spaniel or by a King Charles.

His pilgrimage is over, all his activities are stilled. His love of justice and the clear vision he enjoyed into the causes of events that have of late shaken all England to the core, will be remembered, and his *Love Sonnets* take their just place beside the works of the long line of English makers whose names are chronicled in gold.

Now in the Sussex earth that he so loved he rests in his last camp. In the long ride in the deep woods winds stir the trees; the sun pours down in summer, and in the winter the snow spreads its mantle on the grass. It is all as he wished it should be, for it would please him if he knew that in the moonlight rabbits came out to play around his grave, and that the owls fly silently over his resting-place and light upon the trees as noiselessly as snowflakes light upon the ground.

If there are things we shall remember after we are dead,

*Wilfrid Scawen Blunt*

as he himself sang in his verses on the Pampa, he will remember these. His Eastern wanderings, the strife of politics, his agitated life with all its friendships and its bickerings will fade away; but as he lies face upwards to the stars, he will remember, perhaps perceive, with some new sense unknown to those who labour in the flesh, all that is passing round him. The summer sun, the frost that cracks the trees at night, making the moping birds sit miserable, waiting for the dawn; the fierce north wind, the hoar frost on the leaves coating them with a translucent panoply of fairy scales; the changing seasons, the recurring miracle of day and night, the moon's cold rays, the Pleiades, Orion and his belt; all the familiar constellations, the Pole Star, and Sohail, that he must have gazed at often as he lay awake camped in the desert, all the continual marvel of the growth of vegetation, he will remember. At least I hope so; and if he cannot see them as they pass around him, just as they passed in life, oblivion, the best gift the gods have to bestow, will bring him peace at last.

## Long Wolf

### INTRODUCTORY NOTE BY KERMIT ROOSEVELT

My interest in Mr. Cunninghame Graham's writings was first aroused through reading the dedication in Mr. W. H. Hudson's delightful collection of short stories, gathered under the title *El Ombú*. It runs as follows:

TO MY FRIEND

R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM

(*"Singularísimo Escritor Inglés"*)

Who has lived with and knows (even to the marrow as they would themselves say) the horsemen of the Pampas, and who alone of European writers has rendered something of the vanishing colour of that remote life.

My father had been for many years an eager reader of all that Mr. Cunninghame Graham wrote, and I well remember his appreciation of the following letter which he received from him shortly after Buffalo Bill's death:

*"March 27th, 1917.*

"Cartagena de Indias,  
Colombia.

"The Honourable,  
Colonel Theodore Roosevelt.

"DEAR COLONEL ROOSEVELT:

"I saw by chance today in *Harper's Magazine* that a national monument is to be raised to my old friend Colonel

## Long Wolf

Cody; that it is to take the form of a statue of himself on horseback (I hope the horse will be old Buckskin Joe), that he is to be looking out over the North Platte, and that you have kindly consented to receive subscriptions for it.

"When Cody and I were both young I remember him at the Horsehead Crossing, in or about the year 1880 I think, and subsequently saw him next year with the first germs of his great show in San Antonio de Bejar, Texas. (God bless Western Texas, as we used to say in those days—it is a thirsty land.)

"Cody was a picturesque character, a good fellow (I hope the story of his game of poker on his death-bed is not apocryphal), and a delightful figure on horseback. How well I can see him on his beautiful grey horse in the show!

"Every American child should learn at school the history of the conquest of the West.

"The names of Kit Carson, of General Custer and of Colonel Cody should be as household words to them. These men as truly helped to form an empire as did the Spanish Conquistadores.

"Nor should Sitting Bull, the Short Wolf, Crazy Horses and Rain-in-the-Face be forgotten.

"They too were Americans, and showed the same heroic qualities as did their conquerors.

"I would not have Captain Jim of the Modocs fall into oblivion either.

"All of these men, and they were men of the clearest grit, as no one knows better than yourself, were actors in a tremendous drama, set in such surroundings as the world never saw before, or will see again.

"*Anch' io son pittore*, that is to say, I too knew the buffalo, the Apaches, and the other tribes of the Rio Grande.



## *Long Wolf*

"May I then trouble you with my obolus, a cheque for £20 towards the national monument to Buffalo Bill?

"I envy him his burial-place.

"May the statue long stand looking out over the North Platte.

"If in another world there is any riding—and God forbid that I should go to any heaven in which there are no horses—I cannot but think that there will be a soft swishing as of the foot-steps of some invisible horse heard occasionally on the familiar trails over which the equestrian statue is to look.

"Believe me, dear Colonel Roosevelt,

"Yours most sincerely,

"R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM

"P.S.—I congratulate you most heartily on the force which you are raising. It is like you, and if I had been blindfolded and asked who was raising such a force, I should have answered unanimously, Teddy Roosevelt.

"After eleven months in the Argentine, buying horses for the British Government, I am at present in Colombia on a mission connected with cattle, on the same account.

"R. B. C. G."

I thought at the time that here was the writer that could make Buffalo Bill and his era live and speak and act for our children and our children's children. After the Armistice I made the suggestion, and it was at first favourably received, but upon thinking it over Mr. Cunninghame Graham decided that, since his roaming in North America and participation in our frontier life had been largely confined to our South-West and to Mexico, he did not feel inclined to take up a work which would necessarily deal largely with the bleak frozen winters of the North-West, to which he was a stranger.

### *Long Wolf*

Accompanying his final decision, as a grateful earnest of his interest, and appreciation of the West, he sent the following sketch, which, instead of reconciling us to the decision, can only serve to make us regret it the more.

KERMIT ROOSEVELT

## *Long Wolf*

**I**N a lone corner of a crowded London cemetery, just at the end of a smoke-stained, Græco-Roman colonnade, under a poplar tree, nestles a neglected grave.

The English climate has done its worst upon it. Smoke, rain, and then more smoke, and still more rain, the fetid breath of millions, the fumes of factories, the reek of petrol rising from little Stygian pools on the wood pavements, the frost, the sun, the decimating winds of spring, have honey-combed the headstone, leaving it pitted as if with smallpox, or an old piece of parchment that has long mouldered in a chest.

Upon the stone is cut the name of Long Wolf and an inscription setting forth he died in 1892 in Colonel Cody's Show. Years he had numbered fifty-nine. The legend says he was chief—I think a chief of the Ogalla Sioux, if memory does not play me false.

In high relief upon the cross, our emblem of salvation, a wolf is sculptured, the emblem of the tutelary beast he probably chose for himself in youth, during his medicine fast. It may have been that the name grew from some exploit or some incident in early life. Most probably the long wolf meant more to him than did the cross that Colonel Cody has

## *Long Wolf*

erected over his dead friend and comrade in the wild life they understood so well. If the Long Wolf resents it, they can discuss the matter where they now ride—for that they ride, perhaps some Bronco Pegasus, I feel certain, as heaven would be no heaven to them if they were doomed to walk.

From whence the Long Wolf came so far, to lay his bones in the quiet corner of the Brompton Cemetery where now he sleeps, that is to me unknown, as absolutely as the fair field where the fledged bird had flown was to the poet. All that I know is that the bird was fledged, flew for some nine-and-fifty years, and now rests quietly in his forgotten grave.

The tombstones stand up, white in marble, grey in granite, and smoke-defiled when cut in common stone. They stand like soldiers, all in serried rows. The occupiers of the graves beneath them sleep on undisturbed by railway whistle or motor-horn, by blasts of steam, by factory sirens, or the continuous rumble of our Babylon. These were familiar sounds to them in life. If they could wake and should not hear them, their ears would pine for what had filled them all their lives. Upon each stone is set the name and age and virtues of its occupant. A pious text informs the world that a devoted wife and mother died in the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection. All charitable folk will hope her faith has been rewarded in the empyrean that she now inhabits, just as her virtue was rewarded here on earth, for to be forty years a devoted wife and mother is its own reward.

## *Long Wolf*

A little farther off, a general, his battles over, reposes in his warrior's cloak. He needs it, for the white marble makes a chilly couch in our high latitude. A champion sculler, with his marble boat and broken skulls, has gained his prize. A pugilist is cut in stone in fighting attitude, and farther off there sleeps a publican.

Men, women, children, gentle and simple, poets and statesmen, soldiers, sailors, and solid merchants, once held in honour upon Change, young girls, wives, husbands, mothers, fathers, and representatives of every age and class of man, take their repose under the dingy grass. Their very multitude surely must give them some protection, and a sense of fellowship . . . for they all died in the same faith, with common speech and aspiration, in their own fatherland.

Under the poplar tree, its leaves just falling, golden in the autumn frost, there lies a wilding. No one is near with whom in the long nights of rain and winter he can exchange a word.

The prosperous citizens, in their well-cared-for tombs, with their trim beds above them often gay with flowers, even in death appear to look askance at the new Christian, with his wolf above the cross. No one to place even a bunch of violets on his grave, although the pious hand that buried him, perhaps in foresight of the loneliness certain to overtake the Long Wolf, lost in the thick ranks of palefaces, has placed in two glass cases (one of them is cracked) some artificial pansies—perhaps for thought, perhaps for recol-

## *Long Wolf*

lection—all is one, for thought and recollection fade into one another almost insensibly.

On what forgotten creek, in what lost corner of the Dakotas, where once his race lorded it over buffalo and mustang, the Long Wolf first saw light, I have as little knowledge as of the composition of the mysterious thing that gave him life, accompanied him throughout his days, and then departed into the nothingness from whence it came.

I see the tepees set by the river's side, with the thin smoke that rises from the Indians' parsimonious fire curling out through the poles. The wolfish-looking dogs lie sleeping at the lee side of them; children play in the sun the strange and quiet games that Indian children play. Out on the prairie feed the horses under guard. Amongst these quiet children Long Wolf must have played, lassoed the dogs, or shot his little arrows at the birds. From his youth upward he must have been a rider patient and painstaking as the Indians are with horses, without the dash and fire that characterize the Western men and Mexicans.

At seventeen or eighteen, when he had assumed the name that now so strangely differentiates him from all those with whom he lies, he must have taken part in many a war-party. Upon the trail, strung out in a long line, he must have ridden with the other braves, silent and watchful, holding the horsehair bridle with the high, light touch that every Indian has by nature and so few Europeans can acquire. He must have suffered hunger, thirst, fatigue, and



## *Long Wolf*

all the dangers incidental to the life of those days on the plains long ere the railroad crossed them and when the buffalo migrated annually, in countless thousands, followed by the attendant packs of wolves. What his adventures were, how many scalps he took, and what atrocities he saw committed, only he himself could tell and Indians keep no diaries except in memory.

Little by little, as the West was day by day invaded by the whites, the buffalo grew scarcer and game was difficult to kill, he and the tribe would find their means of livelihood filched from them and their position insecure. Whether the chief took part in the great fight upon the Little Big Horn, or later joined the Ghost Dancers in their pathetic struggle, is a sealed book to all but him who brought the Long Wolf over in his company, and he has joined the chief on the last trail.

It is best perhaps we should know nothing, for, after all, what most concerns those who pass by his grave, rendered more lonely than if it had been dug out on the prairie, by the crowd of monuments of alien folk who crowd about it, is that he lies there, waiting for the last war-whoop, uncared-for and alone.

Whether his children, if he had any, talk of his death in the strange city, buried in fog and gloom, so vast and noisy, with its life so circumscribed by customs and by laws, remains a problem never to be solved. How and of what disease he died is long forgotten by the men who pass his tomb-

### *Long Wolf*

stone so unheedingly. His spirit may have returned to the region of the Red Pipestone Quarry, or ride in some wild heaven, where buffalo are ever plentiful, grass green, and water ever running, that the Creator of the Indians must have prepared for them, as he is all-wise and merciful.

It may be that it still haunts hovering above the grave under the poplar tree. I like to think, when all is hushed in the fine summer nights, and even London sleeps, that the wolf carved on the tomb takes life upon itself, and in the air resounds the melancholy wild cry from which the sleeper took his name.

'Twould be mere justice; but as justice is so scarce on earth, that it may well be rare even in heaven, 'twere better ears attuned to the light footfall of the unshod cayuse and the soft swishing of the lodge-poles through the grass behind the travois-pony should never open.

The long-drawn cry would only break the sleeper's rest, and wake him to a world unknown and unfamiliar, where he would find no friends except the sculptured wolf.

Let him sleep on.

## *El Alcalde de Móstoles*

**I**N the year 1808 Napoleon was at the height of his renown. All Europe lay beneath his feet. England and Russia alone were still unconquered; but in due course he hoped to deal with them. Austria, Prussia, Holland, and Italy were provinces of France. Spain, that had for centuries been inaccessible to conquerors, was beaten to her knees. King Joseph, known to the Spaniards by the name of Pepe Botellas, held his court in Madrid, surrounded by a few sycophants and renegades. All patriotism seemed dead. Murat and his Mamelukes kept down the city with an iron hand. Goya was taking notes of everything, crystallizing the odious tyranny of the French, in his immortal "Horrors of War"—horrors that have never been surpassed, either in reality or paint.

The country, delivered over to the mercies of the invading troops, was seething with revolt, but wanted someone to stand out and lead. Only the partisan El Empecinado was in arms in Navarre and the Basque provinces. For all that, no Frenchman's life was worth ten minutes' purchase outside cantonments or the camp. The country people cut their throats like sheep with their long knives, and often threw their bodies into their wine-vats to get rid of them. In after-

### *El Alcalde de Móstoles*

days, to say a wine had a French tang was long a jest among the peasantry. Still they went on, stabling their horses in the churches, violating nuns and stealing priceless ornaments from the cathedrals and the monasteries. Spain stirred convulsively under the heel of the detested Gabacho, as the people liked to call the French. That which was to prove her strength, and had done so in ages past, was now her weakness, for the intensely local patriotism had formed each town and village into a community apart, slow to combine with one another. "Mi tierra" meant for them, not Spain, but every separate village and a few miles around.

At last the turbulent populace of Madrid, irritated past bearing by the Mamelukes who represented to them not the French only, but their hereditary enemies, the Moors, rose in revolt. Armed with their knives alone, they fell upon the Mamelukes in a narrow street, stabbing their horses and butchering the riders when they fell. Two heroic officers of artillery, Velarde and Daoiz, opened fire with a piece of cannon on the French. Their heroism was wasted—that is, if sacrifice is ever wasted—and the revolt was crushed that very afternoon, in what Murat referred to as a "bath of blood." The two young officers were shot, and by their death secured their immortality in Spain. Madrid was stunned, but the news soon was carried to the neighbouring little towns, by men escaping from the massacre.

Out on the Castilian steppes, fifteen or sixteen miles from

### *El Alcalde de Móstoles*

Madrid, there lies a little town called Móstoles. It lies, almost as one might say, "à fleur d'eau" on the great brown plain. The highroad to Portugal passes down its long main street. Even today it has but thirteen hundred citizens. In summer the houses, built of sun-dried bricks covered with plaster, are calcined by the sun. The winter winds, sweeping down from La Sierra de Guadarrama, scourge it pitilessly. For nine months of the year dust covers everything, falling on man and beast, on the few moribund acacias in the plaza, turning all to the colour of a rabbit's back. During the other three it is a slough of mud that wheel-borne traffic and the long strings of donkeys and mules struggle through painfully. Far off the Sierra of Guadalupe and the Gredos are just visible as faint blue lines hardly to be picked out from the clouds, except in certain states of atmosphere. In the short, fierce summer the mirage spreads illusory pools over the surface of the plain, and in the winter mornings, after a sharp frost, the woods along the foothills of the Guadarrama hang upside down upon the sky. Along the road are dotted many other little dusty towns, all with their little plaza, great church, large enough for larger congregations than they ever hold, their apothecaries with leeches in a glass jar at the door, and fly-blown patent medicines in the window, and barber's shop, that serves as news exchange.

Upon the second of May of the year 1808 news filtered through to Móstoles that there had been a massacre in the

### *El Alcalde de Móstoles*

capital. The seventeen kilometres of highroad could easily be covered on a good horse within two hours, and it is not to be supposed the rider spared the spur.

As it was written, one Andrés Torrejón happened to be Alcalde of the place. An honest countryman of six-and-sixty years of age, in all his life he had never had occasion to show what he was worth. What he was like to the outward visible eye is but a matter of conjecture. Most probably a square-built, round-faced Castilian farmer, his cheeks stubbly with a week's growth of beard—the village barber shore but on a Sunday morning—sparing of speech, yet full of sayings fitted to every accident of life. His dress, that has but little varied, even today, knee-breeches of dark cloth, his jacket short, showing a doublebreasted flowered waistcoat of a sprigged pattern, his linen dazzlingly white, a black silk handkerchief bound like a turban round his head, the whole surmounted by a hard-brimmed, black felt hat, kept in place underneath his chin by a broad band of silk. His interior grace, his honesty, tenacity of purpose, and his enthusiasm, slow to be excited, but when once moved as irresistible as a landslide after rain, he has left stamped upon Castile. It will endure as long as her vast plains wave green with corn in spring, turn leather-coloured under the fierce sun of summer, and in the winter when the keen frosts burn up all vegetation, stretch out desolate, with but the withered stalks of thistles standing up ghost-like in the waste.

The nerves of all true patriots were on edge. Never since



the days of the Saracens had the invader's foot trodden Castilian soil. The news of the last outrage brought all the people out into the plaza before the parish church of the Ascension, a mosque, tradition says, in the days Spanish peasants always refer to as "the time of the Moors." All over Spain the people's nerves were twitching, but yet the heavy hand of Murat had deprived them of all spirit of revolt.

It happened, luckily for Andrés Torrejón, that the ex-Secretary of the Admiralty under Charles IV, Juan Pérez Vilamil, was living in the town, having refused to recognize King Joseph and his usurping court. Long did the Alcalde and Vilamil talk over what was the best course to pursue. Then, after praying in the church, the Alcalde called a meeting of his rustic senators. The people thronged outside the council-room, the very room in which today is set into the wall the tablet that commemorates what was resolved on that eventful afternoon in May. The peasant councillors sat round the council board, with their Alcalde in the chair. Pérez and Gómez, Camacho, López and Galván, all peasants, their hands furrowed with toil and weather, their shoulders rounded with the plough, their faces tanned to a deep brown by the hard climate of Castile, and their eyes twinkling deeply in their sockets, like the eyes of mariners, of Arabs, and of all those who pass their lives upon illimitable plains, scorched by the wind and sun, all waited for what "Uncle Andrew" had to say.

Rising with due deliberation from his seat, after having

*El Alcalde de Móstoles*

taken off his hat and placed it carefully beside him on the table, the Alcalde told of what had happened in Madrid. His actual words are not recorded, only the substance of his speech. As he spoke of the massacre, the shooting down of women and of children in the streets, the execution of the prisoners drawn up opposite a wall, and of the people who had died trampled beneath the horses of the Mameluke infidel, his hearers' hands stole to their sashes, and muttering "Death to the Gabacho," they spat upon the floor. Sitting impassively like figures carved in walnut-wood, the peasant council suffered under Napoleon's heel. Now and again one of them would assent in a half grunt, and anyone who did not know them might have thought they were unmoved. As they sat with their heads a little sideways, their mouths half open, and their breath coming in short gusts that heaved their chests under their heavy rustic clothes, just as a barge heaves on a canal after a steamer passes, they seemed like animals about to spring upon their prey. The Alcalde recapitulated all their country's wrongs. The cuckold Charles IV a prisoner in France, the queen, a harlot left under the dominion of her lover of the day, the troops unpaid and led by officers who did not know their duty, and worst of all the miserable French puppet king, lording it on the throne of Charles V. "Spain wants a leader, someone to show the way, to gather up the scattered bands of guerrilleros and above all a straight and downright declaration that the country is at war. No one has yet stepped out to lead us,

although they slaughter us like flies, scorn us and spit on us; on us Castilians, whose forefathers furnished the famous Spanish infantry that swept through France and Italy like fire. Who would think we were heirs of those who fought at San Quentin?"

The people of the town pressed round the iron-grated windows of the council-chamber, silent, but gazing on their rustic councillors, strung up with fury, cursing their impotence. At last the speaker, tightening up his sash, wiping the foam and moisture from his lips, took a long breath, and after looking round to Vilamil, who nodded at him, said: "Friends and neighbours, I have served you faithfully for years. The time has come that I must now serve Spain. Therefore I, Andrés Torrejón, duly elected the Alcalde of this town of Móstoles, do declare war against the French."

For a brief moment there was silence, silence so absolute that the breath of the people peering through the gratings of the windows sounded as loudly as when a horse upon a frosty morning pants up an incline. Then, rising to their feet, the conscript peasants surrounded the Alcalde, grasping him by the hand, and shouting, "War, war to the knife; death to the assassins of Madrid." The people in the little plaza caught up the cry of "War, war to the knife. Uncle Andrés has declared war upon the French!"

In the closing darkness of that night of May, Andrés Torrejón sat down and penned his memorable pronouncement, the first and last that he was fated to indite, but one that


### *El Alcalde de Móstoles*

made his name immortal throughout the Spanish-speaking world. "Our country is in peril, Madrid is perishing, the victim of the perfidy of the French. Spaniards, hasten to save her. May 2nd, 1808. El Alcalde de Móstoles." Nothing could have been more simple and direct, with just the touch of the ridiculous that gives sublimity. His next act was to send the son of his old colleague on the council, Simón Hernández, on a good horse to take his proclamation to the alcaldes of the neighbouring towns. At once he mounted, and first reaching Navalcarnero, left the fiery cross. Alcorcón, Navalmoral, and Escalona all received the message, and all of them at once declared war on the French. The messenger crossed the Alberche and pushed on westwards, riding without a stop across the plains all through that fateful night in May. In two days' riding he reached Badajoz, his horse still fresh, after having covered nearly two hundred miles. The city rose at once, and sent on word to Cáceres. Cáceres passed on the signal and by the end of May all Spain had risen, not as an ordinary country rises in such circumstances, but town by town, village by village, each declared war upon the French.

The rest is history, the coming of the great "Lor Vilanton" as he was called in the Spain of those days, with the English troops, and the long war of the Peninsula. The hour had struck, and from that moment Napoleon's star began to pale, Moscow completed that which Móstoles be-

*El Alcalde de Móstoles*

gan, and when the French recrossed the swift Borysthenes, slaughtered like sheep by the pursuing Cossacks, their ruin (after God) they owed to the Alcalde of the little town, sun-dried and wind-scorched, in the Castilian plains.



## *Inveni Portum*

JOSEPH CONRAD

**A**LIGHT warm rain fell upon the old-world streets. The houses, with their casement windows, timbered upper stories and overhanging eaves, still kept the air as of an older world. The gateways, with their battlements and low archways through which the mediæval traffic once had flowed, with men-at-arms and archers, strings of packhorses, monks, nuns, and pilgrims come to worship at the shrine of Becket, were now mere monuments.

Time had but mellowed without defacing them, although the damp had made the stone peel off in flakes, giving it a look of scales. Long stretches of the city wall still stood, covered with a growth of wallflowers and of valerian, loved of cats. Houses and yet more houses crowded in upon the cathedral, usurping what by rights should have been a grassy close, guarded by elm trees or by limes, with nests for rooks, who with their cawing supplemented the murmuring masses in the adjacent choir, for surely rooks in a cathedral close must ever praise the Lord for their quiet, sheltered lives. Grouped round its dominating church the city huddled as if it sought protection against progress and modernity. Bell Harry in his beauty seemed a giant light-



house pointing heavenwards. It was indeed a haven where a man who had had his fill of this world's din might well retire to and find rest, for the incoming cricketers were evidently but birds of passage, and when they all departed once more the town would sink back to repose. Although the streets were decorated with flags and floral arches and filled with sun-burned athletes, and the companions of their beds and bats, with cohorts of the clergy come up from their parsonages, greeting effusively Old Brown of Brasenose or Smith of Wadham, whom they met annually at this, the week of weeks—for cricket is a sport that clergymen can attend without offence—nothing could take away the air of mediæval quiet that broods upon the town. The peaceful landscape, with the slow Medway winding through its fields of lush, green grass, full of contemplative cows, its apple orchards, its rubble churches, with their truncated spires and air of immortality, is restful to the eye. The town itself, resting from its long strife with time, brings quiet to the soul.

On every side are relics of the past—gates, barbicans, and walls, the grassy mound of the Dane John, about whose origin so many legends cluster, the square, squat tower, all that remains to show where once the church of Mary of Magdala stood, the crypt where exiled Huguenots performed their maiméd rites, the helm and gauntlets of the Black Prince of Wales and Gascony, above his tomb in the cathedral, speak of the past; the resting past, for in the present,

as in the days when past was present, there can be no peace. The quiet old city seemed indeed a fitting place in which to harbour one who long had battled with tempestuous seas, had heard the tropic rollers kissing the coral reefs and felt the sting of spindrift coating his beard with salt. So to the chapel of the older faith he held, not only as a faith, but as a bulwark against Oriental barbarism, we bore his coffin, buried under flowers, laid it before the altar railings, and his friends, Catholic and Protestant alike, with those who hold that God will not damn those whom He created with the potentialities of damnation in their bodies and their souls, for the mere fun of damning, all listened to the "blessed mutter of the Mass," devoutly on their knees. Within that little fane, with its images of saints, enough for faith, for faith works miracles, even upon the optic nerve, perhaps, but not enough for art, all became Catholics for the nonce. When all is said and done, of all the faiths it is the most consolatory, and tears stood in the eyes of many of the heterogeneous congregation. What, after all, is better for the soul than prayer to an unseen God, in an uncomprehended tongue? When the priest got to "Ite Missa est" no one appeared to have found the service wearisome, for somehow it seemed to join us to the friend whom we should see no more, a little longer.

Then, through the streets all hung with flowers, as if to honour him whom we were taking to his anchorage, we took our way out to the cemetery. We passed through an-

cient archways, skirted the crumbling walls, caught glimpses of the cathedral towers up winding streets, marvelled at the number of the churches, and marked the advertisement of something or another, carried out in the vile bodies of three poor Christians, decked with huge, grinning cardboard heads, as in a pantomime.

I think there was little that we did not see, from the collected band of cricketers, who, standing at the chief hotel, saluted as we passed, as reverently as if the funeral had been that of one of their own mystery, to dogs, that nearly sacrificed themselves beneath the wheels, a skewbald horse that drew a gipsies' caravan, and bullocks going to the slaughter-house, for when the soul is stirred the external eye looks upon the world more keenly than when we sit at home smoking a good cigar. Those sorts of drives in funeral carriages appear to last for ever, in fact one almost wishes that they would, for it is well that now and then a man should see "memento mori" written up plainly before his eyes, for him to read and inwardly digest. As we rolled slowly on into the open country the engine of the motor hearse slowed down to the jog-trot of the old-time funeral horse, so heavily the hand of custom bears upon the reins of everything. I fell into what in the north we call a "dwawm," that state in which the mind is active and as if freed from its subjection to the flesh. Time put the clock back for some five-and-twenty years or so, and I saw him who now lay in his coffin underneath the flowers, his battle over and his

place assured in the great fellowship that Chaucer captains, struggling to make his way. What were his trials, what his disillusionings, and what he suffered at the hands of fools, only himself could tell, and he was never one who wore his heart upon his sleeve for critics and for daws to peck at. For leagues we journeyed, as it appeared to me, passing men tedding haycocks in the field, Boy Scouts in brakes, and now and then a Kentish farmer in an old-fashioned dog-cart.

All the dead man had written and had done welled up in my mind. *Nostromo*, with its immortal picture of the old follower of Garibaldi, its keen analysis of character, and the local colour that he divined rather than knew by actual experience, its subtle humour, and the completeness of it all, forming an epic, as it were, of South America, written by one who saw it to the core, by intuition, amazed me just as it did when I first read it, console Planco, in the years that have slipped past. Then came *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, into which he put the very soul of the old sailing ships, and that of those who sailed and suffered in them, as he himself once sailed and suffered and emerged, tempered and chastened by the sea. *Youth* and *The Heart of Darkness*, and then the tale of *Laughing Anne*, so deep and moving in its presentment of a lost woman's soul, all flitted through my mind. Lastly, *The Mirror of the Sea*, with its old Danish skipper who intoned the dirge of ships, past, present and to come, haunted my memory. So dreaming with my eyes wide

open, all the long years of friendship rolled back again, and my lost friend appeared, as I remembered him—was it a hundred years ago, or was it yesterday? For death annihilates perspective, blots out all sense of time, and leaves the memory of those that we have lost blurred in the outline, but more present to the mind than when Time, seeming but an invention of the poets with his unmeaning hour-glass, and his unnecessary scythe, still rolled on, as it seemed eternally, just as a man when dozing on his horse during a tedious night march, or jogging on behind a troop of cattle in the sun, thinks that his whole existence has consisted but of an ache between the shoulders and a dull throbbing at the knees. Waking or sleeping, or in a mixture of the two, but with my senses wide awake enough, I seemed to see my friend.

His nose was aquiline, his eyes most luminous and full. It seemed his very soul looked out of them, piercing the thoughts of those whom he addressed; his beard, trimmed to a point, was flecked with grey a little and his moustache was full. His face, of the dull yellow hue that much exposure to the tropic sun in youth so often causes, was lined and furrowed by the weather. His dark and wiry hair age had respected except that it had grown a little thin upon the temples, leaving his forehead bare. His cheek bones, high and jutting out a little, revealed his Eastern European origin, just as his strong square figure and his walk showed him a sailor, who never seems to find the solid earth a quite familiar footing after a sloping deck. His feet were small and

delicately shaped, and his fine, nervous hands, never at rest a minute in his life, attracted you at once. They supplemented his incisive speech by indefinable slight movements, not gestures in the Latin sense, for they were never raised into the air nor used for emphasis. They seemed to help him to express the meaning of his words without his own volition in a most admirable way. Something there was about him, both of the Court and of the quarterdeck, an air of courtesy and of high breeding, and yet with something of command. His mind, as often is the case with men of genius—and first and foremost what most struck one was his genius—seemed a strange compact of the conflicting qualities, compounded, in an extraordinary degree, of a deep subtlety and analytic power, with great simplicity.

As he discoursed upon the things that interested him, recalled his personal experiences, or poured his scorn and his contempt upon unworthy motives and writers who to attain their facile triumphs had pandered to bad taste, an inward fire seemed to be smouldering ready to break out, just as the fire that so long smouldered in the hold of the doomed ship in which he made his first voyage to the East suddenly burst out into flames. His tricks of speech and manner, the way he grasped both of your hands in his, his sudden breaking into French, especially when he was moved by anything, as when I asked him to attend some meeting or another, and he replied, "Non, il y aura des Russes," grinding his teeth with rage. England, the land of his adoption, he loved



fervently, and could not tolerate that anything with which he had been once familiar should be tampered with, as often happens when a man adopts a second fatherland, for to change that which first attracted him seems a flat blasphemy.

As the car drew up at the cemetery gate with a harsh, grating noise upon the gravel, I wakened from my dream. The rain had cleared and the sun poured down upon us, as in procession, headed by the acolytes and priests, we bore the coffin to the grave. A semicircle of Scotch firs formed, as it were, a little harbour for him. The breeze blew freshly, south-west by south a little westerly—a good wind, as I thought, to steer up Channel by, and one that he who would no longer feel it on his cheek, looking aloft to see if all the sails were drawing properly, must have been glad to carry when he struck soundings, passing the Wolf Rock or the Smalls after foul weather in the Bay.

Handsomely, as he who lay in it might well have said, they lowered the coffin down. The priest had left his Latin and said a prayer or two in English, and I was glad of it, for English surely was the speech the Master Mariner most loved, and honoured in the loving with new graces of his own.

The voyage was over and the great spirit rested from its toil, safe in the English earth that he had dreamed of as a child in far Ukrainia. A gleam of sun lit up the red brick houses of the town. It fell upon the tower of the cathedral, turning it into a great, glowing beacon pointing to the sky.

*Inveni Portum*

The trees moved gently in the breeze, and in the fields the ripening corn was undulating softly, just as the waves waft in on an atoll in the Pacific, with a light swishing sound. All was well chosen for his resting-place, and so we left him with his sails all duly furled, ropes flemished down, and with the anchor holding truly in the kind Kentish earth, until the Judgment Day. The gulls will bring him tidings as they fly past above his grave, with their wild voices, if he should weary for the sea and the salt smell of it.





145 ombus

2.11

149 ombu

350 What his diellurum (Leonard)

334 -

336 - near Milfonte. Lo. Lake



